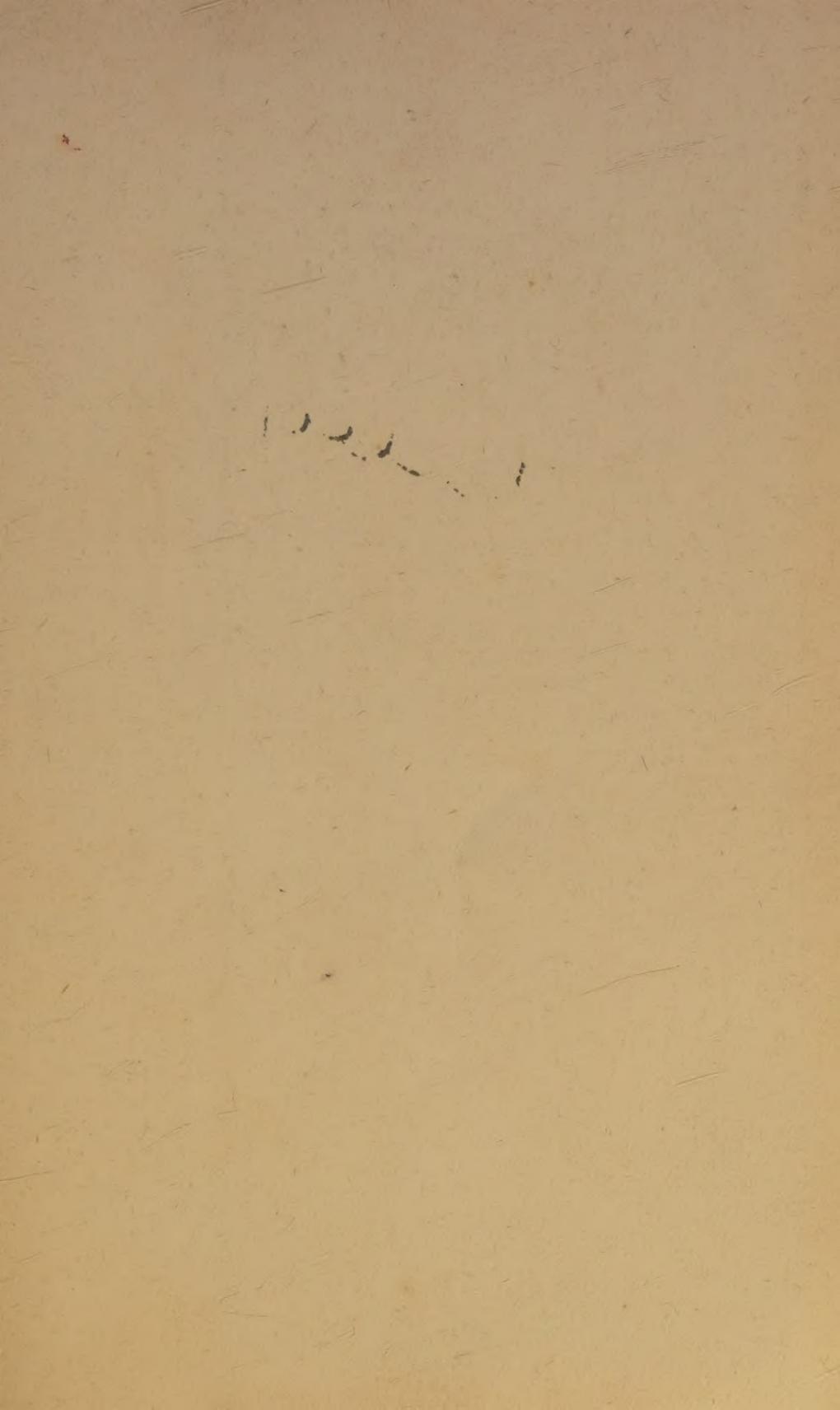




W.H.Kelley







The Normandy Edition  
of the works of  
Guy de Maupassant



P. F. Collier & Son  
New York







GUY DE MAUPASSANT



YVETTE,  
THE HERITAGE,  
AND OTHER STORIES  
INDEX

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# YVETTE

## CHAPTER I

A DOVE OR A HAWK?

**A**S they were going out of the Café Riche, Jean de Servigny said to Léon Saval:  
“If you’re willing, we will walk. The weather is too beautiful to take a cab.”

And his friend answered:

‘All right, I am willing.’

Jean went on:

“It is not quite eleven; we shall arrive there long before twelve, so let us go slowly.”

A lively throng was swarming on the boulevard, that summer-night crowd, full of the joy of living, that moves, drinks, murmurs and flows like a river.

Every few steps a café shed its light upon the mass of diners, whose tables, covered with bottles and glasses, were in the way of passing strollers. In the streets cabs with red, green or blue eyes shot by in the projected light, showing, for a second, the silhouette of a trotting, lanky horse, the elevated profile of the coachman and the somber-hued body of the carriage. Those of the Urbaine Company, with their yellow panels, were an exception to the rest when struck by this light.

The two friends walked slowly, enjoying their

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cigars, in full dress, their overcoats thrown on their arms, flowers in their buttonholes and hats carelessly tilted to one side, as they are often worn after a good dinner and when the breeze is slightly warm.

They were bound to one another by a strong, solid friendship that dated back to their schooldays.

Jean de Servigny, short and thin, slightly bald, somewhat frail, very elegant, with curled mustache, light eyes, delicate lips, was one of those night owls who seem to have been born and brought up on the boulevard; indefatigable and full of vigor, although he always looked exhausted. He was one of those many Parisians to whom the gymnasium, fencing, shower and vapor baths impart a fictitious nervous energy. He was as well known for his fast life as he was on account of his wit, position in society, sociability and amiability that seem to be peculiar to certain men.

A true Parisian, light-hearted, skeptical, changing, energetic and irresolute, capable of everything and nothing, egotistical on principle, generous by fits. He spent his income and amused himself with moderation. Indifferent yet passionate, he was always on the verge of giving into, or resisting, his whims or contrary instincts, all of which he ended by obeying; in this he followed the reasoning of the men of his type, whose windmill logic consisted in going with the wind and profiting by circumstances without giving a thought as to whence they arose.

His friend, Léon Saval, equally wealthy, was one of those superb giants who cause women to glance back despite themselves. He gave the impression of a statue come to life, a type of which models are made and sent to expositions. Too large, too hand-

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some, too tall, too stout, his fault seemed to be that very excess of advantageous qualities. He had been the hero of many a love affair.

When they arrived in front of the Vaudeville he asked:

"Did you warn this lady you would introduce me?"

Servigny laughed.

"Warn the Marquise Obardi! Do you send word to the coachman on the corner that you are going to take his cab?"

Saval, somewhat perplexed, inquired:

"What is this person, anyway?"

"She is nothing but a common, ordinary *parvenue*, a charming thing, originating no one knows where, who appeared one day, no one knows how, in the world of adventurers, and who is equal to the most cunning of that set. But that is neither here nor there. They say that her real name, her maiden name, is Octavie Bardin, from which she derived Obardi, by preserving the first letter of her Christian name and suppressing the last of her family name.

"She is, on the whole, an amiable woman, of whom you will not fail to become the lover, on account of your fine physique. For when Hercules is introduced to Messalina, something is bound to happen. Though I must add that even if the admission to this house is free, one is never under obligation to buy whatever is displayed there. Love and cards are the goods handled, but you are not absolutely expected to patronize either. The exit is also free.

"She took a house in the neighborhood of the Etoile about three years ago and threw open her

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salon to that scum of the continents that comes to Paris to make use of various dangerous and criminal talents.

"How did I come to drop into such a set? I do not remember any more. I went there, as we all go into such places, to gamble and to meet the women who are none too prudish and the men none too honest. I rather like that world of filibusters, with their multifarious decorations, all foreigners, all noblemen, all titled, all unknown to their embassies, except to the spies. All speak of their honor without the least instigation, brag of their ancestors, tell the story of their life every five minutes; each and every one of them is a liar, a swindler, as dangerous as his cards, as deceiving as their names, brave by necessity, for the same reason as the assassin who cannot rob his victims without risking his own life. They are the alumni of the prisons.

"I confess to a certain sympathy and secret admiration for them. They are interesting to study, to know—above all, amusing to listen to; always witty, never insipid, like the government employé. Their wives are always pretty, with a slight smack of foreign rascality and the mystery of their past life, half of which has probably been spent in some penitentiary. As a rule, they have beautiful eyes, gorgeous hair; in fact, they seem to have been especially created for that life. They possess that seductive grace which bewilders and dazzles their victims, over whom they exercise an unwholesome, irresistible charm.

"The Marquise Obardi is a true type of these elegant sirens. Ripe, but still beautiful, bewitching and crafty, she gives the impression of being vicious

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to the very marrow of her bones. One certainly enjoys a fast life in that house—gambling, dancing, midnight suppers, all the usual rounds of the gay life reign supreme."

Léon Saval asked: "Have you been or are you her lover?"

Servigny answered: "I have never been and will never be her lover. I frequent this place on account of her daughter."

"She has a daughter?"

"A beauty. She is to-day the principal attraction of this cavern. Tall, magnificent, just right, eighteen summers, as blonde as her mother is dark, always lively, ready for fun, laughing and dancing with abandonment. Who is or who has been the lucky dog? That is still an open question. Ten are in line, and await patiently the day of judgment. A girl like that in the hands of a woman like the marquise is a fortune, and she is playing a mighty good and tight game. I do not know exactly where I stand. Are they waiting for a better chance than I? Still, I am going to lie low and jump at the first opportunity.

"That girl Yvette is certainly a puzzle to me. She disconcerts me entirely. She is a mystery. If she is not a monster of perversity and keenness, she is the most marvelous phenomenon of innocence that I ever saw. She lives in such an infamous world with a quiet and tranquil ease that is either terribly criminal or frightfully naïve.

"She is the marvelous offspring of an adventuress, sprouted from the filth of that class, just like the most beautiful of roses, or else the daughter of some gentleman of high lineage, some celebrated art-

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ist, or some great nobleman, some prince, or, perhaps, some king, who was the mother's passing fancy. No one knows what she is."

Saval began to laugh.

"You are in love."

"No. I am in the ranks, and there is a world of difference. I shall introduce you to my co-pretenders. Though I might say here that I am in the lead. I seem to be shown special favors."

Saval repeated:

"You are really in love."

"No. She troubles, seduces, worries, attracts and even scares me away. I am afraid of her as of a trap, and still I have the greatest longing for her, just as a thirsty man has for some beverage to quench his thirst. I am charmed by her, and still I only approach her with the apprehension that one would a man suspected of being a clever thief. When near her I experience an irresistible sympathy toward her for her possible candor and a very natural suspicion against her no less probable cunning. I feel that she is an extraordinary creature, either exquisite or detestable. I cannot say yet."

Saval insisted:

"You are in love, I say, and speak with quite a little poetic grace, really you do. Question yourself closely, and you will acknowledge it."

Servigny mused for a while.

"It may be true, after all. At all events, she is always uppermost in my mind. Yes, I do think too much about her. I see her as I doze off to sleep, and then again when I awaken. Yes, I realize that. Her image is ever with me. Is this physical obsession what they call love? Her face is so imprinted

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in my mind that I can at any time see it by closing my eyes, and my heart beats at such moments. But I love her in a queer manner. My strongest desire is to possess her, and yet the idea of marrying her would seem to be a folly, a stupidity, a monstrosity, even to me. I am afraid of her just as the bird is of the falcon coming down upon it. And I am jealous of her and everything that remains unknown to me in that incomprehensible heart. I am forever asking myself, 'Is she a charming child or an abominable deceiver?' She says things that would make a trooper blush, but so do parrots. She is exciting and encouraging, with the air of a true courtesan, and yet she remains as distant as the purest maiden. While seemingly in love with me, she is continually poking fun at me; to the outside world she acts as if she were my lover, and, in intimacy, she treats me worse than she would her brother or valet.

"There are times when I honestly believe she has as many lovers as her mother. Then, again, I cannot help thinking she knows nothing of life, nothing whatever.

"She is a great reader of novels, most of which I have the honor of furnishing, wherefore she calls me her librarian. She reads them as fast as they are printed.

"The result in the make-up of her mind must surely be a strange salad.

"That heterogeneous mixture must be one of the many causes of her strange peculiarities. When one tries to take a view of life through fifteen thousand novels, one doubtless sees it in a queer light.

"One thing remains certain, I never loved a person as I do her.

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"But I will never marry her.

"If she has already had lovers, I shall merely increase the number. If not, why, then I shall be number one.

"It is clear she will never marry any one. Who would marry the daughter of the Marquise Obardi, alias Octavie Bardin? No one, and there are a thousand reasons.

"Where could she find a candidate? In society? Never. Her mother's social position is too well known, as well as the house of which the daughter is the main attraction.

"In the middle class? Still less. Besides, the marquise would not make such a poor speculation; she will never give up Yvette definitely except to a man of the higher class, whom she will never find.

"A man of the lower classes is altogether out of the question. Yvette strictly belongs to no class and can really enter through marriage none of those I named.

"She belongs by birth, education, heredity, manner of life, to the gay grisettes of Paris.

"She cannot escape, unless she enters a sisterhood, which is not probable. Her profession, and her only one, then, is 'Love.' She will come to it, if she has not already. That is her destiny, and that is what I am waiting for.

"Many others are, too. You will see a Frenchman, Monsieur de Belvigne; a Russian, the Prince Kravalow, and an Italian, the Chevalier Valreali, all of whom are candidates; there are others, but they do not count.

"The marquise is biding her time. She knows

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that I have money, and that is why I think she is casting her eye on me.

"Her salon is the most striking of the kind. You will meet some men just as respectable as we are. She seems to have sorted the prettiest of the women of her class, which apparently stands all by itself. Her master idea was to choose adventuresses who have children, girls especially, so that any fool or ignorant victim would surely take these persons to be honest women."

They had reached the Avenue des Champs-Elysées by this time. A slight breeze rocked the leaves of the trees and softly brushed the faces of the strollers. Silent shadows moved under the trees, while others, seated on the benches, looked like dark spots. And these shadows spoke very low, as if confiding some important or shameful secrets.

Servigny continued after a pause:

"You have no idea of the fantastic titles that you will hear in this haunt.

"By the way, I must introduce you as Comte Saval. 'Saval' all by itself would make a bad impression."

But his friend protested:

"No, sir. I shall not submit to the ridicule of borrowing a title, not even among those people. No, sir, not for the world."

Servigny began to laugh.

"You are stupid. They baptized me Duc de Servigny. I cannot say how it happened, though. But the fact remains that I am the Duc de Servigny; and I neither protest nor complain. It makes no difference to me. While, were it not for this title, I should be terribly despised."

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Saval remained unconvinced.

"It may be all right for you, because you are a nobleman, anyway. But with me it is totally different. I am a commoner and must accept my lot for better or for worse. That will be my mark of distinction and my superiority."

Servigny, nevertheless, insisted.

"But that's impossible, old man, altogether too much so. It would appear almost monstrous. You would be made to feel like a ragpicker in a reunion of emperors. Leave it to me and I shall introduce you as the Viceroy of the Upper Mississippi, and no one will say anything."

"It is of no use. I refuse to submit to it."

"All right. And, really, I am stupid to argue with you. I defy you to enter this house unless there is a title given to you, just as ladies are handed bouquets in certain department stores."

They turned to their right into the Rue de Berri, went to the first floor of a beautiful modern house, and left their overcoats and canes in the hands of four servants in knee-breeches. An odor of flowers, perfumes and women impregnated the air; one heard the confused, continuous murmur that told of crowded rooms near by.

A sort of master of ceremonies, tall, erect, of a stately stoutness, with white mutton-chops, approached the newcomer and asked him, after a short, proud bow:

"Whom should I announce?"

Servigny answered:

"Monsieur Saval."

Then the man, opening the door, shouted into the crowd of guests in sonorous tones:

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“The Duc de Servigny!

“The Baron Saval!”

The first parlor was filled with women. One's first gaze fell upon naked breasts, set in clothes and silks of the most glaring colors.

The hostess, standing up, talking to a few friends, turned around immediately and went to greet her new guests with a certain grace in her walk and smile on her lips.

Her narrow forehead, very low, was covered with a mass of black ebony hair, tightly drawn over her head, hiding both her temples.

She was tall and inclined to be stout, a little too much so, on the other side of thirty, but still maintaining the freshness of youth, and possessing a warm, magnetic beauty. Two enormous black eyes shone under this helmet of hair that made one looking at her both smile and dream and wish to secure her for his very own. Her nose was rather thin and mouth a trifle large, but infinitely seducing—made to command and conquer.

Her voice was her greatest personal charm. It rippled from out of her mouth, so natural, so clear, so harmonious, that one experienced a physical joy to listen to it. It was a pleasure for the ear to hear the words escape. It made one think of running water in a brook, and it was a treat to the eye to see those lips, a little too red, part to let the words escape.

She held out her hand to Servigny, who kissed it, and, as she let her fan drop the full length of the golden chain to which it was tied, gave the other to Saval:

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"You are welcome, as are all the friends of the duke."

Then she threw a rapid glance at the superb giant just introduced to her. She had on the upper lip a slight suspicion of a mustache, that darkened as she spoke. She exhaled a delicious odor, some perfume from America or India.

Others were now arriving, all marquises, counts or princes.

Then she said to Servigny with true motherly grace:

"You will find my daughter in the other room. Enjoy yourselves, gentlemen, and be at home."

And she left them to greet other guests, not without having first thrown Saval one of those looks that women grace some fortunate ones with, when the latter have had the good luck to strike their fancy. Servigny took his friend by the arm:

"I am going to pilot you. The parlor, in which you now are, is the Temple of Worldly Pleasures. Second-hand objects, as good as new, even better, rated at a high price, and obtainable by lease only. To your left, the Temple of Money. Down the other end will be found the sanctuary, the market of the young girls. There the products of the worthy friends of the marquise are displayed. In this case a legitimate union might be consented to. This is the future, the fond hope—of our nights. This department is also the most interesting in the museum of moral diseases; these youngsters, whose souls are early dislocated, as it were, just as the joints of circus children are. Come and watch them."

An orchestra was playing a waltz; they stopped at the entrance of the ballroom and surveyed the

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assembly. About fifteen couples were turning around; the men were serious and their dancers kept a fixed smile upon their lips; like their mothers, their gowns were cut low.

Suddenly a tall young miss dashed away from the other side of the room, interrupting the couples that were in her way, and, approaching the two friends, cried:

"Ah! there is Muscade! Hello, Muscade!"

She looked supremely happy; her features seemed to be illuminated with the joy of living. Her white skin, that gilded skin of the auburn-haired girl, shone brightly. She possessed a mass of flaming red hair that she wore curled over her head, which was supported by a flexible neck that was still too thin.

She seemed to have been made to move just as her mother was to speak, so natural, noble, simple were all her gestures and motions. One could not help feeling a moral joy and physical happiness to see her walk, move, incline her head, lift her arms even.

She repeated:

"Ah, Muscade! Hello, Muscade!"

Servigny shook her hand violently, as he would have a man's, and said:

"Mam'zelle Yvette, my friend the Baron Saval."

She bowed to the stranger.

"I am very pleased to meet you, sir. Are you always as tall as that?"

Servigny answered in that sprightly, half-sarcastic tone which he always affected with her, to hide his suspicions and doubts.

"No, indeed, mam'zelle. He put on his biggest

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dimensions to please your mother, who likes large masses."

The young girl then answered in a serio-comic manner:

"All right. But when you come to see me you will please diminish a little. I do not like extremes. See, Muscade is just right!"

Turning toward Servigny, she asked:

"Do you know how to dance, Muscade? Just one dance."

Without answering, he quickly took her by the waist; they both disappeared in a furious whirl.

They danced faster than the others, turned and turned, glided over the floor, madly pivoting, seemingly one person, so closely were they bound together. To see their erect bodies, motionless and stiff limbs, one would have thought they were being operated by an invisible mechanism.

Evidently they were tireless. The other couples soon abandoned hope of keeping pace and let this mad couple have the whole floor to themselves. They were then alone, but still kept on waltzing indefinitely. They seemed to have forgotten where they were, what they were doing, and to have gone away far from the ball, into some ecstasy. The musicians alone followed the two madcaps and kept on playing for them. All eyes were fixed upon Servigny and Yvette, and when they stopped at last every one applauded.

She was all flushed now, her eyes had a strange look, ardent and timid, not so bold as a little while ago, but much softer; the darkened pupils in her extremely light-blue eyes did not appear natural.

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Servigny was somewhat dazed. He had to lean against a door to regain composure.

She said to him:

"Poor thing, you are dizzy. I won that time."

He laughed nervously and gave her an intimate, searching look.

She then said:

"At times you remind me of a cat, when it is angry and is going to spring at you. Come, let us go find your friend."

Without answering her, he took her arm and they crossed the main parlor.

Saval was not alone. The Marquise Obardi was with him. She was carrying on a meaningless conversation in that bewitching voice which turned many a one's head. But her look, that sought to penetrate into his innermost thoughts, seemed to convey an entirely different meaning to what came from her mouth. Upon perceiving Servigny, her expression changed, and she said, smiling:

"I have just rented a cottage to spend two months at Bougival. I hope you will come to see us, with your friend. I shall be there Monday. Why don't you both come to dine Saturday and stay over Sunday?"

Servigny looked at Yvette. She smiled in her usual tranquil, serene manner and said:

"Of course, Muscade will come Saturday. That goes without saying. We shall do a lot of crazy things, we shall have a great time."

For a moment Servigny thought that she put some meaning in her last words.

The marquise then turned her large black eyes upon Saval and asked:

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"You will come, too, baron?"

Her smile, at least, left no room for doubt as to what she meant. He bowed.

"I shall be only too glad to come."

Yvette murmured with a malice that was either perfidious or naïve:

"We shall shock everybody, shall we not, Muscade? And we shall tantalize my regiment."

And she designated a group of men, all of whom remained at a distance with eyes fixed upon her.

Servigny answered:

"Just as you say, mam'zelle."

When he spoke to her he never pronounced the "mademoiselle"; that was his privilege, a sign of familiarity.

Saval inquired:

"Why do you, Mademoiselle Yvette, call Servigny 'Muscade'?"

She answered candidly:

"Because he always slips out of your hand. You always think you have a good hold on him, and yet he gets away."

The marquise spoke in an absent-minded and languorous manner; she was evidently absorbed in some other thought, while her eyes were bent on Saval.

"These children are so funny!"

Yvette did not relish this remark.

"I am not funny; I am just frank, that is all. I like Muscade, and he always escapes me; that makes me angry."

Servigny made a deep bow:

"I am never going to leave you, neither day nor night."

She exclaimed with terror:

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"No, indeed! In the daytime I do not mind, but at night-time you would be in the way."

He asked with cold-blooded impertinence:

"Why?"

She replied with amazing and tranquil audacity: "Because I imagine that you look at your best when dressed!"

The marquise, without a trace of emotion or surprise:

"You two surely do not pay attention to what you say. You cannot be innocent to such a degree."

Servigny added ironically:

"That is my opinion."

Yvette stared at him, and, evidently hurt, said haughtily:

"You are impudently impolite, altogether too much so since a few days."

Turning around, she called:

"Chevalier, come to my rescue. I am being insulted."

A thin, dark-haired gentleman approached.

"Who is the guilty one?" said he, smiling, with a sort of constrained air.

She nodded toward Servigny.

"It is he; but I like him better than any one of you, because he's less of a bore."

The Chevalier Valreali bowed.

"We do our best. We have perhaps less advantages, but surely not less devotion."

A tall, stout gentleman, with gray mutton-chops and stentorian voice, was coming up to them.

"Mademoiselle Yvette, your servant."

"Ah, Monsieur de Belvigne," said she.

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Then, turning toward Saval, she introduced the newcomer:

"My aspirant, big, fat, rich and stupid. That's the way I like them. A real brass-band leader. Oh, but you are taller than he. Let me see, how shall I baptize you? I shall call you Monsieur de Rhodes, Jr., because your father must have been a giant. You two must have interesting things to tell each other over everybody else's head, so good evening."

And she went toward the orchestra to tell the musicians to play a quadrille.

Madame Obardi said distractedly, just to say something:

"You tease her all the time, and you are making her temper ugly, besides encouraging and even creating evil traits."

He replied:

"Have you not then terminated her education?"

She pretended not to understand, and continued to smile serenely.

Just then, perceiving a solemn gentleman, seemingly dressed in medals, she hurried toward him.

"Ah, prince, how nice of you to come!"

While drawing Saval away, Servigny said to him:

"That is the last one of my serious rivals, the Prince Kravalow. Is she not superbly beautiful?"

"I think they are both extremely so. The mother suits me."

Servigny bowed.

"At your disposition, old man."

The quadrille was about to begin, and the two friends, being in the way, were shoved here and there by the joyous couples.

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"Let us go see the Knights of the Green Cloth." They went into the gambling parlor.

Lookers-on were gathered around the table, gazing intently at what was taking place there. Very little talking was done; the tinkle of money was the predominant sound, as if it were asserting itself above the cry of human voices.

They all wore medals, strange-colored ribbons, the same stern expression. They were especially distinguishable by their beards.

The stiff American with his horseshoe, the proud Englishman with his beard spread like a fan over his breast, the Spaniard with his jet-black hair almost hiding his eyes, the Roman with that enormous mustache which Victor Emmanuel created for Italy, the Austrian with his whiskers and shaved chin, the Russian general with bristling mustache, and Frenchmen with gallant mustaches, revealed the fancy of barbers of many different parts of the world.

"Do you play?" asked Servigny.

"No. Do you?"

"Not here. Do you want to leave? We shall come back on a more quiet day. There are too many people; you cannot become acquainted properly."

As soon as they were in the street, Servigny asked:

"Well, what do you think of the place?"

"Very interesting. I prefer the ladies to all the rest."

"I should say so. Those women are the elixir of love. You feel the atmosphere at the slightest contact with them, just as you smell perfume at a

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perfume shop. Artistic—to their finger-tips—and delicate—to a nicety. Expensive—oh, yes—but you cannot regret your money."

Saval asked:

"Who is the paymaster of these ceremonies?"

Servigny shrugged his shoulders to show his ignorance.

"I really do not know. The last one was an English peer, who disappeared three months ago. She may now derive her income from the gambling, or, possibly, from the gamblers, for she sometimes has caprices. But, tell me now, is it certain we shall go to Bougival to dine Saturday? I shall have a better opportunity in the country, where formality is comparatively absent, to study Yvette thoroughly."

Saval answered:

"I have nothing to do that day, so I am willing."

As they walked through the Champs-Elysées, Servigny kept silent, wrapt in his thoughts about Yvette. Finally he exclaimed:

"Good heavens! what I wouldn't give to be Yvette's first lover! I should give—I should give—"

Before Servigny had decided what he would give, the pair had reached the Rue Royale, where Saval bid him good night, and left him to continue his way alone.

## CHAPTER II

### A HOT PURSUIT

The table was set on the veranda overlooking the river. The villa, named "Spring," was midway up the hill, right at the bend of the Seine, just before arriving at Marly.

An island, Croissy by name, opposite the house, made a splendid horizon with its mass of green trees, and a considerable length of the large river could be seen, as far as the floating café of the Grenouillère, which was hidden by thick foliage.

It was one of those calm evenings, vividly colored, such as are often enjoyed on the banks of a river and that give a real sensation of happiness. Not the slightest breath of wind disturbed the branches of the trees nor the clear, mirror-like surface of the Seine. And still it was not too warm; it was just right; one felt most comfortable. A certain beneficial coolness, as it were, seemed to emanate from the banks of the river.

The sun was gradually disappearing behind the trees, bound for other countries, and one aspired, it seemed, a most delightful well-being from the earth slumbering already in the peace of this vast space.

When they left the parlor to go to dinner, they all remained in ecstasy before this grand spectacle. A sweetly softened gaiety invaded all hearts: they

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felt that they were going to be so happy, to dine in this landscape, with such a large river and beautiful dying day for a background, breathing in at the same time a clear and balmy air.

The marquise had taken Saval's arm, and Yvette that of Servigny.

There were just the four.

The women seemed altogether different to what they were in Paris, Yvette especially.

She hardly spoke; she appeared languorous, serious.

Saval, not recognizing her any more, asked her:

"Is there anything the matter with you, mademoiselle? You are so changed. You have become so calm and reasonable."

She answered:

"It is the country that has produced this effect upon me. I am not the same. I feel queer. But I am never the same, not even for two consecutive days. To-day I shall look like an insane person, to-morrow like an elegy. I change all the time; I do not know how. Some days I should like to kill people, not animals; I would never kill an animal; and then other days I cry for the least little thing. A whole swarm of different ideas go through my head. It all depends upon how I rise. Every morning, when I awake, I can tell you what I am going to be like until evening. It may be our dreams that predispose us in that way. It depends also upon the book I am reading."

She was dressed in a white flannel suit, which enveloped her in the floating softness of the goods. Her loose waist, with large plaits, indicated, without showing it, and although not closely fitted, a

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solid and already womanly form. And her delicate neck emerged from a froth of white lace, fairer than her dress, a precious jewel of skin and flesh, that bore her heavy mass of golden hair.

Servigny looked at her a long time, and finally said:

"You are adorable this evening, mam'zelle. I should like to see you always so."

She said to him, with a smack of her usual roguishness:

"Do not propose to me, Muscade. I might take it seriously, and it would be mighty costly to you."

The marquise seemed happy, very happy. All in black, nobly draped in a simple dress that enhanced her well-defined lines, a little red in her waist, a wreath of red pinks hung from her belt, she seemed to be impregnated with an uncommon ardor, which betrayed itself in the whole of her person, in the simplicity of her dress, upon which the flowers looked as if they were bleeding; in her eyes, that fell heavily, as it were, upon the company; in her subdued voice, in her rare motions.

Saval also appeared serious, absorbed. Every now and then, taking his beard in his hand, which he stroked caressingly, he seemed lost in deep thought.

An intense silence reigned for a few minutes.

As they were passing the trout, Servigny declared:

"Silence is sometimes very agreeable. Often people are in closer contact with another when silent than when talking. Isn't that so, marquise?"

"That is true," said she, turning a little toward

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him. "It is delightful to think of nice things together."

And she looked at Saval; the two remained a few seconds in a staring contemplation of each other.

A slight movement, almost invisible, took place under the table.

Servigny revived the conversation.

"Mam'zelle Yvette, you will have me believe you are in love if you continue to be so serious. With whom could you be in love? Let us see, if you do not mind. I shall omit the less important of your aspirants. I shall only bother with the principal ones. With the Prince Kravalow?"

At the sound of this name Yvette was roused.

"How could you think of such a thing, Muscade? He looks like a wax figure of a Russian that has won medals in a hairdressers' and barbers' exposition."

"So much for him; but there is the Vicomte Pierre de Belvigne."

This time she broke into a peal of laughter and said:

"Do you see me clasping Raisiné around the neck"—she gave everybody nicknames—"and murmuring up his nose:

"My dear little Peter, my divine Pedro, my adored Pietri, my charming Pierrot, give your big poodle head to your dearie, who wants to kiss it'?"

Servigny announced:

"Take away Number Two. Now the Chevalier Valreali, whom your mother favors."

Yvette had regained her former gaiety.

"Tearful? He is worse than the Magdalen. He

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is only good for funerals. Every time I see him I think I am dead."

"Is it a case of love at first sight? The Baron Saval."

"Monsieur de Rhodes? Oh, no. I should feel as if I were loving a triumphal arch."

"Then it must be with me. Modesty and prudence kept me from suggesting myself first. I have only to thank you."

She answered, gracefully joyous:

"With you, Muscade? No, indeed. I like you, but do not love you. Wait, I do not want to discourage you entirely. I do not love you—yet. You have a good chance—perhaps. Persevere, Muscade; be devoted, attentive, obedient, yielding to my strangest whims, ready to please me at all times, and—we shall see—later."

"But, mam'zelle, I should rather furnish all that after, if you do not mind."

She asked roguishly:

"After what, Muscade?"

"After you will have proved that you love me."

"Well, act as if I did love you, and believe it, if you want to."

"But——"

"Silence; that is enough about that."

He saluted military fashion.

The sun had sunk beyond the island, but the whole sky seemed still enflamed, and the calm waters of the river were apparently changed to blood. The reflected light of the horizon reddened all the houses, objects, and even the people.

As Yvette was looking away into the distance before her the marquise put her hand, unconsciously,

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as it were, on that of Saval; but when the young girl moved, the marquise withdrew it and began fixing something in her waist.

Servigny, who had not lost anything of this comedy, proposed:

"If you want to, mam'zelle, we shall take a walk on the island after dinner."

"Oh, yes!" she cried joyously; "and we shall go alone, too?"

"Yes, all alone, mam'zelle."

Then silence again reigned.

The vast silence of the horizon, the sleepy restfulness of the evening benumbed all hearts, bodies and voices. There are quiet hours, hours of meditation, when it is almost impossible to speak.

The servants served noiselessly. The fixed firmament seemed to glow less and less, and night was about to open entirely her wings over the earth. Saval asked:

"Do you expect to stay long in this country?"

The marquise emphasized each word:

"Yes. As long as I shall be happy in it."

As it became impossible to see any more, lamps were brought out. They threw a strange, pale light on the table under the great obscurity of space; and presently a torrent of flies fell upon the tablecloth. They were small flies that went to be cremated over the lamp chimney, and became a sort of light-gray dust, powdering the white linen.

One could not help drinking them in the wine, eating them in the sauces, and seeing them on the bread. They even annoyed the diners by coming in crowds and tickling their hands and faces.

The beverages had to be thrown away, the plates

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covered, and infinite precautions used to protect the dishes.

Yvette was much amused. Servigny did his best to protect her and her dishes from this invasion, using his napkin as a weapon. But the marquise was soon disgusted, and hurried the rest of the dinner through.

Yvette, who had not forgotten Servigny's promise, said to him:

"Let us go on the island now."

Her mother recommended in languorous tones:

"Do not stay long. We shall accompany you as far as the boatman's."

And they walked in couples, the young girl and her friend being in the lead. They could hear in back of them the marquise speaking very low and fast. It was a jet-black night. But the heavens glittered with little bits of fire, and apparently sowed them in the river, for the water was aglow with them.

The frogs croaked, and the robin redbreasts whistled their shrill notes in the calm air.

Yvette asked all of a sudden:

"Where are they? I do not hear them walking any more."

And she called:

"Mother!"

No one answered.

"They cannot be far away; I heard them only a little while ago."

"They must have gone back," murmured Servigny. "Your mother may have been cold."

In front of them a light shone. It was Martinet's inn. They called for some one, and a man

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came out and installed them in a boat that was tied to a mass of seaweeds near the bank.

They soon reached the other side, where they disappeared in the forest of trees.

A certain freshness exhaled from the wet ground and hovered above the thickly-leaved branches, that looked as if they carried as many birds as leaves.

Far away in the distance a piano was playing a popular waltz.

Servigny had taken Yvette's arm, and little by little had wound his arm around her, softly tightening his hold.

"What are you thinking of?" said he.

"Nothing. I am so happy."

"Do you not love me?"

"Yes, yes, Muscade, I love you a great deal; only let that subject drop. This is too pleasant to stop and listen to your foolishness."

He drew her toward him, although she tried to snatch herself away, and the warmth of her body affected him. He stammered:

"Yvette."

"Well?"

"I love you."

"You are joking."

"No, I am not; I have loved you for ever so long a time."

She was continually trying to escape, attempting to withdraw her arm crushed between the two bodies. And they walked along, every which way, like two persons under the influence of liquor.

He was at a loss as to what to say to her, for he understood that she could not be dealt with as with an ordinary woman; yet he did not know

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whether she consented or really did not comprehend him. He racked his brain to find the right words, tender and decisive enough.

Every second he was repeating:  
“Yvette, tell me, Yvette.”

Then, casting away all sentiment of prudence, he kissed her upon the cheek. She stepped aside and said impatiently:

“You are simply too ridiculous. Can you not leave me alone?”

The tone of her voice was not very sharp, and really did not make clear what she thought of this, nor what she wanted; perceiving she was not over-irritated, he kissed her in the neck just where it started, a spot which he had long observed and worshiped. She tore away from him.

He was stupefied at her rapid escape and disappearance, and it was a few seconds before he called:

“Yvette!”

She did not answer. He searched for her, keeping an eye open for any light object which might resemble the whiteness of her garment.

“Mam’zelle Yvette!”

The robin redbreasts were no longer heard.

Vaguely annoyed, he hurried his step and strengthened his call:

“Mam’zelle Yvette! Mam’zelle Yvette!”

No sound; he stopped a moment to listen. There was not the least noise; hardly a shiver of the leaves above him. The frogs alone croaked.

He wandered from bush to bush. He even went to the bank opposite Bougival, and returned to the Grenouillère, in the neighborhood of which he continued his search, repeating:

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"Mam'zelle Yvette, where are you? Answer. It was only a joke. For heaven's sake, answer! Do not keep me hunting like this."

The bell of a distant clock began to ring. He counted the number of strokes—twelve. He had been wandering about two hours. It suddenly dawned upon him that she might have gone home alone, so he went back, too.

A servant, sleeping in the vestibule, was waiting for him.

Servigny woke him up and asked:

"When did Mademoiselle Yvette get back? I left her because I had a visit to pay."

The servant answered:

"Yes, Monsieur le Duc. Mademoiselle Yvette came back before ten o'clock."

He went to his room and then to bed.

But he remained there wide awake, unable to sleep. That stolen kiss had upset him. He mused. What did she want? What was she thinking of? How pretty, how attractive!

His desires, calmed down by the life he led, by former conquests, by lovers of all sorts, regained their vigor before this singular child, so young, enervating and inexplicable.

He heard the clock strike one, then two. It was useless, he could not sleep. He was uncomfortably warm and perspiring. His heart beat heavily, and so did his temples. He opened the window. A cool whiff of air came in, and he drank it in, in long draughts. It was a very dark night. But suddenly he perceived right ahead of him, in the garden, a shining speck, like a red-hot piece of coal. He thought:

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"A cigar? It can only be Saval." He called:  
"Léon!"

A voice answered:

"Is it you, Jean?"

"Yes. Wait a minute, and I shall come down with you."

He dressed hastily, joining his friend, who was enjoying a cigar.

"What are you doing down here at such an hour?"

Saval answered:

"Taking a rest."

He laughed. Servigny shook hands with him.

"My congratulations, old man. As for me, I am bored to death."

"That means?"

"It means that Yvette and her mother are not exactly the same."

"What happened? Tell me."

Servigny told of his unsuccessful attempt, and went on:

"That girl upsets me. Just think of it, old man, I could not go to sleep. What a queer thing a girl is! Looks simple and yet she is a puzzle. A woman of worldly experience, who has lived and loved, can be easily penetrated. But a young maiden is a riddle. I am beginning to think she is making a fool of me."

Saval was rocking his chair, but stopped to say:

"Beware! she'll bring you to wedlock. There are illustrious examples. The Comtesse de Montijo, who at least was of a good family, used similar wiles to become empress. Do not play Napoleon."

Servigny murmured:

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"As far as that is concerned I am not afraid, for I'm neither a simpleton nor an emperor. Are you sleepy?"

"No, not at all."

"Let us stroll along the river bank."

They opened the gate and went down along the river toward Marly.

It was one of those cool moments that just precede the day, the hour of deep sleep and absolute rest and calm. The light, familiar noises of the night were hushed. The robin redbreasts did not sing, and the frogs had ceased their din.

Servigny, who was at times a poet and philosopher, said all of a sudden:

"She really upsets me. In arithmetic one and one make two. In love one and one make one, and still they make two. Have you ever felt that? That need of absorbing a woman in you or disappearing in her? I do not mean the need of an embrace, but that torment, both moral and mental, of becoming one with another being; of exposing before him or her your soul, your heart; and, also, of penetrating into his or her innermost thoughts. Yet you are as ignorant of that being; you never discover all the fluctuations of his or her wishes, desires, even opinions. You never really succeed in comprehending the unknown, the mystery of a soul that you feel so near you; of a soul hidden behind two eyes that look at you, limpid as the waters, transparent as if there were no secret back of them; of a soul that speaks to you through a beloved mouth; of a soul that hurls its thoughts at you, one by one, by means of words, though it still remains so far away from

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you as the stars from one another, even more impenetrable than they are. Curious, is it not?"

Saval answered:

"I don't go in as deeply as all that. I never try to see behind the eyes. I do not bother with what is wrapped up as much as I do with the external wrapper."

And Servigny:

"But Yvette is singular. How will she greet me this morning?"

As they reached Marly, they noticed that the sky was becoming pale.

"It is time to return," declared Saval.

They did so. When Servigny entered his room he saw the pink horizon from his window.

He closed the shutters, pulled and carefully crossed one curtain over the other, went to bed, and finally fell asleep.

He dreamed of Yvette throughout his slumbers.

A peculiar noise woke him. He sat up, listened, but heard nothing. Then a noise like the fall of hail came to his ears.

He jumped out of bed, ran to the window, opened it, and saw Yvette in the alley, who threw handfuls of sand in his face.

She was dressed in pink, wore a large-brimmed hat with a big feather in it and laughed maliciously:

"Well, Muscade, are you still sleeping? What did you do last night, to wake up so late? Out on an adventure, my poor Muscade?"

He was dazed by violent daylight, still tired, and, above all, surprised at the mocking composure of the young girl.

He answered:

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"I shall be down presently. Just a few minutes to dress."

"Hurry up. It is ten o'clock, and I have something important to tell you about a plot we are going to form. Besides, we shall have lunch at eleven."

He found her on a bench with a book of some sort, most probably a novel. She took his arm in a frank, familiar way, as if nothing had taken place, and led him to the garden.

"Here is my proposition: We are going to disobey mother, and you will bring me to the Grenouillère. I want to see it. Mother says that honest women should not go there. But it makes no difference to me what you should or should not do. You will bring me, will you not, Muscade? and we shall have a great time."

She exhaled a delicious odor, without his being able to determine its nature, so vague and discreet it was.

Where did it come from? Her dress, her hair or her skin? That was what he asked himself as she was speaking to him, so near that he could smell her breath, which was equally delicious in odor. He came to the conclusion it was the perfume of her graceful and attractive youth.

She said:

"You promise, do you not, Muscade? As it's going to be very warm, mother'll refuse to go out. We shall leave her with your friend. They shall think that we are going to the woods. Oh, how glad I shall be to see the Grenouillère!"

Just then they were at the gate in front of the

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Seine. The sun shone on the shining surface of the river.

Every now and then a canoe or a rowboat passed, or the shrill whistles, short or prolonged, of the trains that brought the inhabitants of Paris in the suburbs, could be heard.

Lunch was announced.

No one spoke. A crushingly hot July noon oppressed every one. The heat seemed thick, and paralyzed body and soul.

Yvette, alone, although taciturn, seemed animated, nervous and impatient.

As soon as the dessert had been served she suggested:

"Suppose we take a walk in the woods. It would be fine under the trees."

The marquise, who looked to be very tired, murmured:

"Are you insane? How can a person go out in such weather?"

The young girl was overjoyed, and said:

"Well, then, we shall let you have the baron for company. Muscade and I shall climb up the hill, and we shall lie on the grass and read."

And turning toward Servigny:

"Does that suit you?"

"At your service," answered he.

The marquise shrugged her shoulders and sighed:

"Really, she is crazy!"

Then she tendered her hand to the baron languorously, and he kissed it.

Yvette and Servigny went away. They followed the bank of the river, crossed the bridge and sat

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'down under the weeping willows that were on the edge of the island.

The young girl drew from her pocket a book and said:

"Muscade, you are going to read to me."

He was on the verge of running away.

"But I am unable to read aloud decently."

She replied seriously:

"No excuses, now. You are a nice aspirant. Everything for nothing! Is that your motto?"

He took the book, opened it and was much surprised. It was the description of the ants' mode of life by an English author. And as he remained silent, thinking she was really making a fool of him, she grew impatient.

"Why don't you read?" she inquired.

"Is it a bet or a caprice?" he asked.

"I saw the book in a store. They told me it was the best on the subject, and I thought it would be interesting to learn about these small animals that run through the grass. Read!"

She lay down on the grass outstretched, resting on her elbows, her head in her hands, and eyes fixed upon the ground.

He read in monotonous tones, stopping every little while to ask:

"Is not that enough?"

She shook her little head, and, having found an ant on a piece of a torn blade of grass, she kept the insect on it to study it closely. She listened attentively to all the surprising details of information about their life and customs.

And, as if a maternal tenderness had been awakened in her, Yvette gradually became full of sym-

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pathy for this little animal, so intelligent and cunning; she even let it run along her finger, and felt the desire to kiss it.

Just as Servigny was reading about the way in which they held contests of skill and strength the enthusiastic young girl tried to kiss the insect, that immediately escaped and began to travel over her face. She gave a shrill cry as if threatened with an awful danger, and tapped her face frantically. Her companion, laughing heartily, took the ant out of her hair and substituted a kiss in its place; Yvette did not turn her forehead away this time.

She rose and declared:

"That's more interesting than novels. Let's go to the Grenouillère now."

They arrived in the part of the island turned into a park full of immense trees. A few couples meandered under the high leaves, along the banks of the Seine, in which glided many rowboats. There were women with young men, working girls with their lovers in shirt-sleeves, their frock-coats thrown under an arm, tilted high hats, tipsy and tired out, also *bourgeoisie* with their families.

A far-off continuous rumor of human voices, a dimly grumbling clamor, announced the favorite establishment of the boatmen.

It loomed up before them, all of a sudden. An immense boat, with a tent covering, was anchored near the shore, carrying a world of females and males, drinking or else standing up, shouting, singing, howling, dancing, cutting up capers to the noise of a screeching piano, out of tune, and vibrating like a tin can.

Tall, red-headed, licentious women, displaying

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themselves in their most exciting manner, meandered, staring at the men with the insistence typical of inebriate women, and coarse language upon their reddened lips.

The smell of perspiration and colognes was strongly noticeable.

The drinkers swallowed liquors of all colors, and shouted, bawled, evidently yielding to the need of regular brutes, of having their ears full of these abominable noises.

Every few seconds a swimmer jumped into the water, which splashed over the nearest drinkers, who yelled savagely.

The river was full of small boats. Long, thin canoes passed swiftly by, paddled by rowers with bare arms, whose muscles twisted under their sunburnt skin.

Heavier boats also wended their way, loaded with people. A schoolboy, on a lark, trying to be smart, rowed with strokes worthy of a windmill, and struck the other crafts, thus raising an outcry from their boatmen, and then he disappeared, somewhat scared, but not before he had almost drowned two bathers.

Yvette was radiant and walked arm in arm with Servigny in the midst of this noisy and mixed crowd, seemingly overjoyed at elbowing this disreputable company, especially the women, whom she observed with a calm, even sympathetic eye.

"Look at that one, Muscade; she seems to be having a great time. And what beautiful hair she has."

When a pianist, dressed in red and wearing an immense straw shade hat, started playing a waltz, Yvette suddenly grasped her companion, and carried

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him away with the energy that characterized her dancing. They danced so long and so frantically that everybody watched them. The drinkers, standing on the tables, beat time with their feet; others used glasses; the musician seemed to have become mad, he hit the ivory keys so hard, lifted his hands so high, made all sorts of gestures, swaying his head wildly with its huge covering.

He stopped suddenly and slid to the floor, where he lay at full, hidden under his hat, as if he were thoroughly exhausted. Peals of laughter broke forth throughout the café, and all applauded.

Four friends rushed forward, as in case of accident, picked him up, each taking hold of an arm or a leg, and paraded him around the island.

A joker followed them, chanting the "De Profundis," and a procession formed; every one following the mock corpse.

Yvette joined in, laughing heartily, talking to everybody, excited by the noise and movement. Young men stared at her, pressed against her; Servigny was growing afraid that the outing was going to end badly.

The procession kept on, gradually increasing its speed, till the four bearers began to run, with a bawling crowd at their heels. When they arrived at the banks of the river they swung their friend in it.

A loud cry of joy came from all throats, while the dazed pianist paddled back to shore, cursing, coughing, spitting out the water and finally struggling desperately to emerge from the mud.

Yvette clapped her hands for joy and repeated: "Oh, Muscade, what a grand time we're having!"

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Servigny observed her seriously and was somewhat vexed, or hurt, to see her so much at home in such a crowd. His natural instinct of the born gentleman was shocked.

He said to himself in astonishment:

"You have it in the blood."

He felt like speaking familiarly to her, as one does a certain class of women at the first meeting. She was to him, then at least, of the same stock. Their obscene, filthy language did not seem to produce any effect upon Yvette.

"Muscade, I want to take a swim."

He answered curtly:

"All right, mam'zelle."

They soon had procured themselves suits. She was the first to be ready, and stood on the beach, smiling, exposed to the gaze of all. Then they went together in the heated water.

She swam, wrapt in happiness and the waters that went to and fro, softly caressing her body, gracefully rocked by the ripples of the river. Suddenly ceasing to swim, she turned over and floated. His eyes devoured her almost, as she lay on top the water, exposing the undulating lines of her body and firm breast, enhanced by the very close-fitting bathing suit.

He was entranced by her beauty. He was again beside himself. She suddenly turned toward him, and, having contemplated him a while, began to laugh.

"You're a nice fellow," she said.

He was irritated and hurt by this mocking demeanor, and an evil spirit rose in him, a revengeful

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one, which made him try to be cutting, even insulting:

“Would you fancy such a life?”

“What life?”

“Come, don’t try to fool me. You know what I mean.”

“Upon my word, I don’t.”

“Stop this farce. Do you or don’t you?”

“I don’t understand you.”

“You’re not so stupid. Besides, I told you yesterday evening.”

“I must have forgotten.”

“That I love you.”

“You?”

“I.”

“What foolishness!”

“I assure you, upon my honor.”

“Prove it.”

“That’s my greatest wish.”

“Which?”

“To prove it.”

“Go ahead.”

“You didn’t say that yesterday.”

“But you didn’t propose anything.”

“Ridiculous.”

“Besides, I am not the one to approach on that score.”

“Well, that’s a good one. Who is, then?”

“Mother, of course.”

“Your mother? Oh, that’s too comical,” and he burst out laughing.

She suddenly became grave, and looked straight into his eyes.

“Listen, Muscade, if you really love me enough

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to marry me, speak to mother first, and then I'll answer you."

Now, more than ever, he thought she was making a fool of him, and he became enraged.

"You must surely mistake me for some one else."

She again directed her clear, soft eyes upon him, and said, after some hesitation:

"I don't understand you yet."

Then he blurted out with a rough and coarse ring in his voice:

"Please put an end to this ridiculous comedy that has already lasted too long. Don't play the innocent baby; it doesn't become you. You know very well that there can be no marriage between us—only love. I told you I loved you—that's the truth—I repeat it, I love you. Now, don't pretend not to understand."

They were in the water, just keeping their heads above it, face to face. She remained motionless for a few seconds, stunned, unable to penetrate the meaning of these words; then she blushed very deeply.

The blood rushed to her head, and, without another word, she swam at top speed toward land. He was unable to catch up with her.

He saw her pick up her wrapper and rush into her cabin.

He took a long time to dress, extremely perplexed as to what to do next, whether to excuse himself or persevere.

When he was ready, she was gone. He returned home slowly, anxious and troubled.

The marquise was strolling with the baron in the garden on the lawn.

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Perceiving Servigny, she said in that languorous way which had been hers for the past two days:

"Didn't I tell you not to go out in such weather? Now Yvette is sunstruck. She's gone to bed. She's as red as a poppy, and has a fearful headache. Neither of you has any sense."

The young girl did not come down to supper. When something to eat was sent to her, she answered she was not hungry, and begged to be left alone. The two guests returned by the ten o'clock train, and the marquise remained silent and dreamy.

She lived for and by love, just as an enthusiastic horseman or sailor, and experienced sudden attacks of passion as one does of a disease. They enervated or left her apathetic, according to their exalted, violent, dramatic or sentimental character.

She was born to love and be loved. Risen from a very low station in life to luxury through love, which she chose unconsciously for a profession, instinctively she accepted money as naturally as the embrace which procured it. Many men had enjoyed her caresses, without her having felt any affection, or any disgust, for them.

She tolerated their embraces indiscriminately, with tranquil indifference, as a matter of course; just as the traveler necessarily eats the differently prepared meals of many lands, for, after all is said and done, one must live. Though sometimes her heart was struck with the fire of love, and she was again and again the victim of a grand passion that lasted a few weeks or months, according to the physical or moral qualities of the man.

Those were the delightful moments of her life. She loved, body and soul, with ardor and a complete

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abandonment of herself. She threw herself into it as one does in a river to drown, and gave up her entire self, ready to die, if needs be, transported into an ecstatic happiness. The latest intrigue was, to her fervid imagination, the deepest passion of her life, and she would have been very much astonished had she been reminded of the many men who had been the object of her dreams and night watches, spent in the contemplation of the stars.

Saval had captivated her, body and soul. She thought of him, his features were photographed in her mind, and she was happy, feeling secure with a certainty of her present joy.

She heard a noise behind her. Yvette had just entered, dressed in her usual manner, but pale and with a noticeable brilliancy in the eyes, as if she had just undergone some great fatigue.

"I want to speak to you," said she.

The marquise, rather astonished, looked at her. She loved her daughter, selfishly, proud of her beauty, as of a fortune, for she was too beautiful herself to be jealous; she was too indifferent to be really guilty of the plans which were imputed to her in reference to her daughter.

"I am listening, child," said she.

Yvette looked at her piercingly, in order to catch the real effect that her words were going to produce.

"Something extraordinary took place to-day."

"What?"

"Monsieur de Servigny told me he loved me."

The marquise waited anxiously. As Yvette did not continue, she asked:

"How did he say it? Explain."

Then Yvette threw herself at her mother's feet in

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an affectionate pose that was familiar to her, and, pressing her hands in her own, added:

"He asked me to marry him."

The Marquise Obardi was stupefied and cried:

"Servigny? You're crazy!"

Yvette did not take her eyes off her mother, seeking to espy thoroughly her thoughts and surprise. She asked gravely:

"Why am I crazy? Why wouldn't Monsieur de Servigny marry me?"

The marquise, visibly embarrassed, stammered:

"That can't be; you are mistaken. You did not hear or understand rightly. M. de Servigny is too rich for you, and too—too—Parisian to get married."

Yvette rose slowly, saying:

"But if he loves me as he says."

Her mother answered impatiently:

"I thought you were old enough, and knew enough, not to put such ideas in your head. Servigny is a man of the world and extremely selfish. He will marry a woman of his means and station. If he said he wanted to marry—he really meant to—"

The marquise was incapable of unveiling her suspicions, and remained silent.

"Pshaw! leave me alone," said she at last, "and go to bed."

"Yes, mother."

She kissed her mother on the forehead and calmly went away.

As she was about to leave the room, the marquise called her back.

"How's your sunstroke?"

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"There was nothing the matter with me, except that I was troubled by Servigny's talk."

And the marquise added:

"We shall come back to that subject. Above all, henceforth don't stay alone with him, and rest assured he will not marry you, that he merely wants to—dally with you."

That was the best way the marquise knew how to express herself. Yvette returned to her room.

Madame Obardi began to think.

For many years she had lived quietly and happily in her luxury and had cast aside all serious thoughts. She had never considered Yvette's future; that had always been a matter which she put off until the question should come up itself, imperiously demanding a solution. She well knew her daughter could never marry a rich man, of good family, except by some almost impossible good fortune, which has once in a while placed an adventuress on a throne. Besides, she never hoped such a thing, and she was too busy combining plans for herself to bother about anything which did not concern her directly.

Would she follow her mother's footsteps? Why not? But the marquise had never stopped to think how that would come about.

And here came her daughter, without her expecting such a thing, with one of those questions that are practically unanswerable, and which forced her to arrive at a conclusion in an affair so difficult, dangerous, delicate from all points of view, especially so perplexing to your conscience, when your own child's life is at stake, in reference to such matters.

She was too keen, though, to be mistaken as to

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Servigny's intentions; she knew men by experience, particularly those of his class. This knowledge, then, made her involuntarily cry:

"Servigny marry you? You're crazy!"

Why had he tried the old game, this *roué*, man of the world? What would be his next move? How could one make Yvette understand, open her eyes? She might, perhaps, be led astray.

Who would believe that a girl of her age and education could be so innocent?

The marquise was worried, though soon tired of thinking so seriously. She sought to decide something, but in vain. The situation was far too complicated and embarrassing.

Weary of her troubles, she thought:

"Pshaw! I'll watch them more closely, and await developments. If need be, I shall speak to Servigny, who will soon comprehend me."

She did not, however, ask herself what she would say, nor what he might answer, nor even what agreement might be reached; still she was happy to be thus relieved of her cares, without having had the trouble of forming a resolution, and her thoughts drifted back to Saval. She threw rapid kisses toward the direction of Paris and murmured:

"I love you! I love you!"

## CHAPTER III

### A TERRIBLE REVELATION

And Yvette did not sleep. Just as her mother, she was looking out the open window, and tears, her first sad tears, filled her eyes.

Up till the present time she had lived in the reckless and serene faith of her happy childhood! Why had she thought, reflected, analyzed? Why should she not have been like all other young girls? Why did a doubt, a fear, suspicions, all painful, come to her mind?

She seemed very knowing, because, apparently, she touched upon all subjects, and had imitated the manner and tone of the people around her. But she was no wiser than a little boarding-school girl; her audacity of speech, often *risque*, was due to her extraordinary powers of assimilation and not to any conscious science on her part.

She spoke of love as a painter's or musician's son speaks of their father's art at the age of twelve. She well knew, or rather suspected, what kind of mystery shrouded this word—too many allusions had been whispered before her to leave her entirely ignorant—but how could she know that other families were different?

People kissed her mother's hand with apparent respect. All their acquaintances bore titles, seemed

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rich, well connected. Two king's sons came evenings to see her mother. How could she guess?

She was naturally naïve. She did not go into the bottom of things, nor study people, as was her mother's custom. She lived in her own happiness.

But now Servigny, by means of a few words, of which she instinctively felt the brutality, had awakened in her a sudden uneasiness, unfounded at first, but later transformed into a tantalizing apprehension.

She had shut herself up, run away like a wounded beast, hurt very deeply by those words, which she repeated ceaselessly, just to penetrate their full purport: "You well know that between us it isn't a question of marriage, but of love."

What did he mean? Why this injury? Was she ignorant of some secret shame? Was she the only one who was? What was it? She was disheartened, as when one discovers a hidden infamy, the faithlessness of a beloved person, or is unhappy in a love affair that has absorbed one's sole ambition in life.

She had cried, searched, brooded, a pitiable prey to vague fears and doubts. Then she compared her situation to that of novels she had read, and was almost consoled by the romances which her imagination built to suit the occasion.

Was she, by chance, the natural daughter of a prince? Had her mother been seduced and abandoned by some king, the King Victor Emmanuel, perchance, and had been obliged to flee before the wrath of the royal family?

No; she was more likely a forsaken child, fruit of a guilty union, of very exalted parents, who had

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been entrusted to the marquise, who had adopted and brought her up.

Other conjectures also kept her mind active. She sorted them, now accepting, now rejecting their probability. She soon became, in her own eyes, a heroine of the same stamp as are found in Scribe's and George Sand's works. Her ever-changing nature was almost happy in this new situation.

She had meditated a long time, until late evening, and had eagerly worked out a scheme to worm the truth out of her mother, which succeeded in part.

She had expected a greater surprise, on her mother's part, an affecting scene, and the unveiling of a great secret.

But she was disappointed. Her mother just looked annoyed; her constrained air, her uneasy attitude, that betrayed a certain degree of reticence, made the young girl understand it would be better not to insist, that the mystery was of another, baser character, which she would have to unravel herself. She went back to her room with a heavy heart, her soul and spirit really and painfully sad. She wept for a long time, with her elbows on the window-sill, her head in her hands.

The coolness of the early morning hours forced her to leave the window and go to bed.

The next and the following day saw her very reserved and melancholy. The process of reflection was becoming rapidly familiar to her; she was learning to spy, guess and reason. She saw everything and everybody in a new light; a suspicion was rising in her mind, against all, everything she had formerly believed, even her mother. By Wednesday she had hit upon a line of conduct and action, a

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real system of spying. She rose Thursday morning, with the intention of being as crafty as a detective and on her guard against every one.

Saval and Servigny arrived at about ten o'clock. She greeted them with a certain reserve, without affectation, familiarly.

"How are you, Muscade?"

"Pretty well, thank you; and yourself?"

He watched her.

"What's her new game, now?" said he to himself.

The marquise took Saval's arm and Servigny gave his to Yvette, and took a walk around the lawn.

Yvette, quiet and thoughtful, looked down upon the sand in the path, apparently not listening to her companion nor answering him.

Suddenly she inquired:

"Are you a true friend, Muscade?"

"Why, surely, mam'zelle."

"But a real, faithful one?"

"Your friend, body and soul."

"True enough never to lie once to me?"

"Never."

"To the point of telling the whole, naked, bare truth?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, what do you really think, at bottom, of the Prince Kravalow?"

"Hum!"

"See, you're getting ready to lie."

"No, indeed. I am trying to find the right words. Well, he's a Russian, a real one, who speaks Russian, who may have had a passport to get into France, and whose only false attributes are his name and title."

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"You mean to say he is——"

He hesitated, but finally making up his mind, said:

"An adventurer, mam'zelle."

"Thanks. Chevalier Valreali is no better?"

"Just as you say."

"Monsieur de Belvigne?"

"He's of another sort. He is a gentleman—provincial, honorable—to a certain degree—slightly indebted."

"And yourself?"

He answered unhesitatingly:

"I am one of those who are vulgarly called 'rounders,' member of a good family, having, once upon a time, possessed a certain degree of intelligence, which I wasted trying to be witty; splendid health, lost by a fast life; some intrinsic worth, which was lost through idleness. All I have left is a certain amount of money, a fair worldly knowledge, a complete absence of prejudice, a strong contempt of men, even women, a very clear realization of the usefulness of my acts, and a vast toleration for roguery. Yet I am frank at times, as you may observe, and even capable of a sincere affection, as you could ascertain if you only would. Such as I am, I gladly offer myself to you."

She was not laughing; she listened attentively to get his real meaning.

She added:

"What do you think of the Comtesse de Lammy?"

He quickly replied:

"Please excuse me from giving my opinion of the women."

"Isn't there one of them——"

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"No," he interjected.

"Then you have a very poor opinion of them all. Isn't there an exception?"

He grinned insolently, and, with that brutal audacity he used as a weapon:

"Those who are present are always excepted."

She blushed a little, but asked very composedly:

"What do you think of me?"

"I think you have much practical good sense, and that you certainly can keep your hand hidden, make fools of people, set your traps, and that you are patiently waiting to see how things are going to turn out."

"Is that all?"

"That's all."

"I'll make you change that last opinion."

She went toward her mother, who was walking with Saval, apparently holding a conversation of a very tender nature. Idly making figures in the sand, she was speaking, without looking at him, but holding his arm, and closely pressed to him. Yvette observed her mother a few seconds, and a vague doubt shot through her mind, as does the shadow of a cloud pushed along by the wind.

The bell for luncheon rang.

The meal was silent and mournful.

A storm was brewing. Big clouds seemed to be ambushed in the horizon; they were mute, but thick, and apparently full of tempest.

After the coffee had been served, the marquise asked:

"Are you going to take a walk with your friend, Servigny? Fine weather for a stroll in the woods."

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After casting a rapid glance at her mother, she answered:

"I'm not going out to-day."

The marquise appeared annoyed, and insisted:

"It would be healthful for you, child."

Then Yvette almost blurted:

"I told why I am staying home, the other night."

Madame Obardi had forgotten it, in her eagerness to remain alone with Saval. She blushed, was troubled, and fearful lest she would not get a chance to be alone with her friend. She mumbled:

"That's true; I had forgotten it."

Yvette began to do some embroidery work. The men smoked. The marquise, very much irritated, eyed Saval pitifully, and racked her brains to find a pretext to get her daughter out of the way. When she had to realize that she could not succeed, she said to Servigny:

"If you stay overnight, we'll all go to-morrow to Chatou, and have lunch at the Fournaise."

He understood, smiled, and bowed.

"With the greatest of pleasure, marquise."

The day passed slowly and painfully, constantly threatened by the storm.

Supper time came at last. The sky was heavy with slow and large clouds. Not a breath of air.

This meal was also silent. A certain uneasy feeling, a vague fear, seemed to render all taciturn.

They remained on the terrace after supper; the conversation was ever languishing. Night was about to fall, and gave promise to continue the torture of that day's crushing and smothering heat. Suddenly the horizon was rent asunder by a fiery hook, and their faces were illuminated, for a few

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seconds, by a dazzling light. Then a peal of thunder broke the silence, and the heat became doubly oppressing.

Yvette rose, saying:

"I am going to retire; the storm has made me nervous."

After bidding every one good night, she went away.

As her room was just above the terrace, its light lit up the chestnut tree in front of it, and her shadow could be seen on a green background. But soon all was dark again. Madame Obardi heaved a sigh of relief.

"My daughter's gone to bed."

Servigny said:

"I shall do the same, with your permission, marquise."

He kissed her hand, and likewise disappeared.

She remained alone with Saval, in the dead of night.

Instantly she was in his arms, pressing him to her and embracing him. In spite of his protestations, she kneeled down before him and murmured:

"I want to look at you in the flashes of lightning."

But as soon as her candle was out, Yvette, tortured by a painful and confused suspicion, went barefooted to the railing and listened.

She could see nothing, as she was above them, on the very roof of the terrace itself.

All she could hear was a confused murmur of voices; her heart beat so hard that it filled the ear with noises. A window was just being shut. Ser-

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vigny must have also retired. Her mother was then alone with the other.

A second flash, dividing the sky in two for a fraction of a second, gave her a glimpse of the landscape which she knew so well; and she saw the large river, the exact color of molten lead, just as one dreams of fantastic streams. An instant later a voice under her said: "I love you."

She heard no more. A strange shiver went through her body, and her mind was all in a whirl.

A dead silence seemed to hover over the country. She could hardly breathe, oppressed as she was by something unknown and horrible. Another fiery thread enflamed the sky and lit up the horizon, immediately followed by another one, and many others still.

The voice which had been heard a few minutes before repeated in louder tones: "Oh, how I love you! How I love you!" And Yvette knew the voice well; it was her mother's.

But she had read so many novels in which women, even mothers, had erred and fallen, only to rise to honor again, at the *dénouement*, that she was not astonished beyond all bounds to find herself in a situation similar to that of many novels. The violence of her first sorrow, the bewilderment of the surprise, were gradually becoming attenuated in the remembrance of analogous affairs which had already been suggested to her by her readings.

She said to herself:

"I shall save my mother."

This resolution, worthy of a heroine, restored her serenity, and she felt herself strong and ready for the fray and all necessary sacrifices. Now she

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thought of the means she must employ. Only one expedient seemed good and in accordance with her romantic nature. And she worked herself up, as an actor does for a scene, for the conversation in which she would engage with her mother.

The sun had risen. The servants were busily active about the house. The chambermaid brought her a cup of chocolate, which Yvette had her put on the table.

"Tell my mother that I don't feel well," said she; "that I shall stay in bed until the departure of the guests; that I couldn't sleep last night, and that I'd like to be left alone, because I should like to rest, if I could."

The servant, somewhat astonished, looked at the dress, still wet, and thrown on a carpet like a cast-away rag.

"Did mademoiselle go out?" said she.

"Yes; I took a walk in the rain to enjoy the coolness."

And Yvette waited, for she knew her mother would come.

The marquise jumped out of bed and went to her daughter, after hearing the servant's message, for a slight suspicion had taken hold of her, since she had heard that cry of "Mother!"

"What's the matter with you?" said she.

Yvette looked at her, and stammered:

"I—I—"

Then, overcome by a sudden and terrible emotion, she began to gasp.

The marquise was astonished.

"What is the matter with you?"

The young girl forgot all her plans and carefully

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prepared phrases, hid her face in her hands, and stammered:

"Oh, mother! Oh, mother!"

Madame Obardi stood there before her, far too moved to understand completely, though she guessed almost everything, with that subtle instinct which constituted her greatest strength.

As Yvette could not speak, suffocated by her tears, her mother, finally irritated and feeling that the explanation which she had always avoided was no longer to be shunned, said roughly:

"Will you, or will you not, tell me what ails you?"

Yvette could hardly articulate:

"Oh, mother! Oh, mother!"

The marquise, whose fears and embarrassment were changing to anger, shrugged her shoulders, and prepared to go away.

"I really think you're crazy. When it's all over, tell me."

But the young girl suddenly uncovered her face, moistened by her tears, and said:

"No, listen—I must speak to you. Listen. Promise—we'll go away together, very far, to some country place; we'll live like two peasants; no one will know what became of us. Do, mother, please do; I beg you, I beseech you."

The marquise was speechless, remained dumfounded in the middle of the room. She had common blood in her veins, easily excited. Then a sentiment of shame, of a guilty mother, mixed with a certain vague sentiment of fear and exasperation of a passionate woman whose love is threatened,

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made her shudder, ready to beg forgiveness or commit an act of violence.

"I don't understand you," said she.

Yvette went on:

"I saw you—mother—last night. You mustn't any more—if you only knew—we shall go away, together—just the both—I'll love you so much you'll forget."

Madame Obardi said in a trembling voice:

"Listen, girlie, there are things which you don't understand yet. Don't forget—don't forget—that I forbid you—to speak to me—of—of such things."

But the young girl, suddenly resuming her rôle of rescuer, which she had imposed upon herself, said:

"No, mother; I am no longer a child, and I have the right to know. Now, I know that we receive people of bad reputation, adventurers, and that, for this very reason, we are not respected. I know still more. That must no longer be, do you hear? I don't want it. We are going to go away. You'll sell your jewelry; we'll work, if needs be, and we'll live as honest women, somewhere, far away from here. And if I am lucky enough to get married, so much the better."

Her mother looked at her with her dark eyes, evidently showing irritation. She answered:

"You are not in your senses. You will kindly do me the favor to get up and take your lunch with the rest of us."

"No, mother. There is some one whom I will never see again. You understand me. Either he or I will leave. Choose between us."

She was sitting up on the bed, and gradually

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raising her voice, speaking as if on the stage, thoroughly imbued with the atmosphere of the drama which she had imagined to herself, almost forgetting her sorrow, only to better remember her mission.

The marquise, altogether stupefied, repeated again:

"But you are crazy."

That was all she could think, on the spur of the moment.

Yvette answered, in her most energetic and theatrical manner:

"No, mother; this man will leave the house, or I will, for I will not surrender."

"And where will you go—what will you do?"

"I do not know, I do not care—I want us both to be honest women."

These ever-recurring words, "honest women," angered her mother, who shouted to her:

"Keep still! I shall not allow you to speak to me like that."

Yvette, thoroughly discouraged, stammered:

"Oh, mother!"

The marquise beat her breast as a penitent in the act of confessing, and, agitated and flushed, she advanced, like a demon, toward the bed.

"When one is a beautiful girl, one must live on that beauty—or starve—there is no choice."

Then, coming back again to her original idea, she added:

"Yes, the honest women deprive themselves of us. They are the worthless creatures, because they are not driven to this life by necessity. They have

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all they need, and more besides; and yet they are not faithful. They are the abominable creatures."

The marquise then stopped, seeing her daughter so miserable; and she became sad, remorseful, and moved to such pity that she opened her arms, threw them around her daughter, and sobbed:

"My poor little one, if you only knew how you hurt me."

They both wept for a long time.

The marquise, who could not remain melancholy for any length of time, rose and broke away softly from her daughter's embrace.

She spoke very low now:

"That's how it is, my dear; it can't be helped. You must take life as it comes."

Yvette kept on crying. The shock had been too sudden for her to recover her senses quickly.

The marquise continued:

"Come, dress, and come down to lunch, so that no one will notice anything."

The young girl nodded in the negative; she could not speak; finally she managed to sob out an answer:

"No, mother, you know what I told you. I shall not change my mind. I will not go out of my room till they have gone away. I don't want to see any more of those people. If they return, you'll never see me again."

The marquise had already dried her tears, and, tired from the emotions of that day, murmured faintly:

"Be good, now. Don't be unreasonable."

But, after a moment's silence, she said:

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"Yes, it's better for you to rest this morning. I shall come up to see you this afternoon."

Thoroughly serene now, she kissed her daughter on the forehead, and went away.

As soon as her mother had disappeared, Yvette locked her door, in order to be alone and think about what she was really to do next.

About eleven o'clock the chambermaid knocked at her door, and asked:

"The marquise, your mother, would like to know if mademoiselle wishes anything, and what would she like to have for lunch?"

Yvette answered:

"I'm not hungry. All I want is to be left alone." And she stayed in bed as if she were very sick.

At about three some one knocked again. She asked:

"Who's there?"

It was her mother's voice.

"Your mother, dearie; I came to see how you were getting along."

The marquise approached her, as one would a convalescent.

"Well, do you feel better? Would you like to eat an egg?"

"Nothing, thank you."

The marquise sat on the edge of the bed. They remained silent for a while, but the marquise, seeing her daughter gave no sign of speaking or moving, said to her:

"Aren't you going to get up?"

Yvette answered:

"Yes, in a little while."

Then she said gravely:



"She first took out a sheet of paper and wrote:  
'I died so as not to become wicked.'"

—Yvette, p. 78.



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"I have thought it over a great deal, mother, and here is—here is my resolution. The past is the past, and let us forget it. But the future will be different—or else—or else I know what I should do. Now, just let this be the last of this subject."

The marquise, who thought the subject had been threshed out before this, felt herself becoming impatient. This was really too much. This big fool of a girl ought to have understood a long time ago. But she did not answer anything, and repeated:

"Are you going to dress?"

"Yes, I am ready."

Her mother took the place of her chambermaid, brought her her stockings, corset and skirts; then she kissed her.

"Do you want to take a walk before supper?"

"Yes, mother."

And they strolled along the bank of the river, only speaking very ordinary things.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LAST STRUGGLE

Early the next morning, Yvette went to sit alone where Servigny read the story of the ants' life to her. She said to herself:

"I shall not leave this place before I've resolved to do something definite."

She soon had studied the situation in all its phases.

What would she do if her mother refused to accept her conditions, and did not give up her life, acquaintances, everything, to go and hide away with her, from the world, in some far distant land?

She could leave alone—flee. But where? How? How could she live?

By working? At what? Who would give her work? But then, the humble, mournful life of the working girl seemed a little disgraceful to her. She thought of becoming a teacher in a private family, like the heroines in certain novels, and of being loved by the eldest son. But for that she ought to have been of a good family, so that she might have been able to answer the exasperated father, in a proud voice:

"I am Yvette Obardi."

That was impossible. Besides, it was too old a scheme.

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The idea of entering a convent was no better. She felt no special vocation for a religious life, as her compassion was never more than fleeting and intermittent. No one could save her by marriage, being what she was. There was no possible issue, no definite resource.

Besides, she wanted to do something great, noble, really strong-minded; she thought of suicide.

She decided upon this quite calmly, as if she were going to take a trip, without reflecting, without really seeing Death, understanding that it was the end, and no chance of starting over again, the departure without a return, the eternal adieu to this earth.

She was immediately in favor of this extreme, with the light-heartedness of a young, exalted soul.

But now it was a question of choosing the method. They all seemed painful, riskful, and requiring a violent act which was most repugnant to her.

She very quickly set aside the dagger and revolver, that often merely wound and disfigure, and require too much familiarity with their use—the cord, as being common, a pauper's expedient, ridiculous and ugly. Poison was the next one suggested, but which? Almost all provoke suffering and have more or less of an emetic effect. Then she thought of chloroform, because she had read of how it had been used to force a girl to asphyxiate herself.

She experienced a sort of proud, intimate and joyful sentiment at this resolution. They would all learn what she was, and what was her character.

She went to Bougival, where she stopped at the druggist's to buy some chloroform for a toothache,

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as she intimated. The man knew her well, so gave it to her without hesitating.

Then she went to Croissy, where she obtained another flask of the narcotic; to Chatou for a third; to Rueil for a fourth; she came home late for luncheon. Her appetite being roused by this errand, she ate heartily, like a person who has indulged in much physical exercise.

Her mother was happy to see her so hungry, and was greatly quieted. She announced at the table:

"All our friends are coming over to spend Sunday with us. I have invited the prince, the chevalier, Monsieur de Belvigne."

Yvette grew slightly pale, but answered nothing. She went out immediately after lunch—went to the station, and took a ticket for Paris.

That whole afternoon was spent in going from one pharmacy to the other to buy a few drops of chloroform.

That evening she returned home with her pockets full of these small bottles.

She did the same the next day, and by some hazard was able to obtain from one apothecary a half a quart of the liquid.

Saturday she stayed home; it was a heavy, warm day; she spent the whole of it on a steamer chair on the terrace.

Being thoroughly resolved to accomplish her act, her mind was now perfectly at ease.

The next day she put on a beautiful blue gown, which became her very well, for she wanted to be pretty.

While she was contemplating herself in the mirror, she said suddenly:

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"To-morrow I'll be dead." A peculiar shudder ran through her body. "Dead! I shall speak no more, nor think, nor will any one see me again. And I shall never see the world again, either."

She looked at herself for a long time, her face especially, as one who had never seen it before. She examined her eyes, discovered a thousand things in them which she ignored before; was astonished to find a hidden trait in her face which she was unconscious of possessing; and generally treated herself like an old friend one had not seen for some time.

She said to herself:

"Yes, it is I; my reflection in that mirror. How strange to see one's self! Without the looking-glass, we should never know ourselves. Everybody else would but ourselves."

She drew both her large tresses over her breast, following, with her eye, all her motions, poses, even gestures.

"How pretty I am!" she thought. "To-morrow I'll be dead, over there, on my bed."

She threw a glance at her bed, imagined that she saw herself stretched on it, whiter than the sheets themselves.

"Dead! In a week this face, these eyes, these cheeks, will be but a piece of rottenness, in a box, down in the earth."

A terrible sentiment of anguish hung over her heart.

The clear sun fell in large rays over the country, and the sweet morning air came in through the window.

She sat down, and repeated to herself: "Dead!"

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It was as if the world was going to disappear for her; but no; nothing would be changed in this world, not even in her own room. Yes, her room would remain the same, as would the bed, the chairs, the dressing-table, though she would be gone, and no one would be sad, even, except her mother perhaps.

People would say: "How pretty that little Yvette was!" and that's all. And while she looked at her hand, leaning on the arm of the armchair, she thought again of the fate of her pretty skin and flesh. This time a long shiver of horror ran through the whole of her body, and she could not bring herself to understand how she could disappear alone—without the earth doing so, too, so much did she think herself a part of it—of this country, of the air, of the sun, of life itself.

Peals of laughter, voices, calls, that noisy gaiety of week-end parties, at the outset of the reception, were heard, and she recognized the strong voice of Monsieur de Belvigne, who had just started a song.

She rose, unthinkingly, and went to see. All applauded. They were there, all five, with two other gentlemen, whom she did not know.

The bell for luncheon rang.

"I'll teach them how to die," said she.

She went down with a firm step, something of the resolution of the Christian martyrs entering the arena where the lions were awaiting them.

She shook hands with every one affably, though haughtily. Servigny asked her:

"Are you less cranky, mam'zelle, to-day?"

She answered in a severe and singular manner:

"To-day I am in my Paris humor. I want to do all sorts of foolish things. Look out."

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Then, turning toward Belvigne:

"You'll be my victim, Malvoisie. I am going to take you all to the fair at Marly."

There was really a fair at Marly. The newcomers were introduced—the Count Tamine and Marquis de Briguetot.

Yvette was silent during the repast, saving her energy and gaiety so that no one would guess what was going to take place; everybody would be the more surprised. "Who would have thought it? She seemed so happy, so contented!"

She tried not to think of the evening, when they would all be on the terrace; this was the time she had chosen.

She drank as much wine as she could, and two glasses of fine champagne, so that she was slightly flushed, feverish, both in body and mind, and ready to do anything.

"Ready, set, march," said she.

She took De Belvigne's arm and set the pace for the others, whom she addressed:

"Come, now, you'll be my escort. Servigny, you are sergeant; you go to the right. Then you'll put in front the strangers' guard, the two exotics, the prince and chevalier, next the two recruits, who start to-day. March!"

They were off. Servigny began to imitate the bugle, while the newcomers imitated the drum. M. de Belvigne, slightly abashed, said:

"Ah, Mademoiselle Yvette, be reasonable; you'll compromise yourself."

She answered:

"It's you I'm compromising, Raisiné. I don't care, personally. There'll be nothing of it to-mor-

## YVETTE

row. Sorry, but then you mustn't go out with such girls."

They stupefied the strollers in Bougival. Everybody turned around; the inhabitants came to the door; the passengers on the train from Rueil to Marly hissed them; the men on top of the trains shouted:

"Throw them in the water—in the water."

Yvette walked like a regular soldier, dragging Belvigne by the arm. She did not smile, but kept serious, a sort of sinister immobility in her face. Servigny interrupted his bugle to shout commands. The prince and the chevalier were much amused. The two young men played the drum uninterruptedly.

They created a sensation at the fair. Women applauded; young men mocked them; a stout gentleman, with a touch of envy in his voice, said:

"There are some who are certainly not bored to death."

The young girl caught a glimpse of a merry-go-round, and she forced Belvigne to mount one of the horses nearest hers, while the rest scrambled for an animal. She kept Belvigne on for five rides, much to the bystanders' amusement. He was pale and almost seasick when he got off.

Then she meandered all over. She made the men weigh themselves, among a host of spectators, and buy ridiculous toys, which they were obliged to carry in their arms wherever they went. The prince and chevalier were beginning to think that the diversion was going too far. Servigny and the two young men went on undaunted.

## YVETTE

They arrived at the bank of the river, where Yvette had a strange fancy.

"Let him who loves me jump in," said she.

No one did. A crowd gathered. The women were stupefied, the men sarcastic.

She repeated:

"Then there isn't one of you capable of jumping in for my sake."

Servigny murmured:

"The deuce!"

And he dashed into the river.

His splash sent drops of water up on Yvette's feet. An astonished murmur of gaiety was emitted by all.

Then the young girl picked up a piece of wood, threw it in the water and cried:

"Bring it to me!"

The young man swam after it, brought it back in his mouth and presented it to her like a dog.

"Good doggie," said she, giving him a pat on the head.

A stout lady was indignant.

"Stupid!" said she.

Another added:

"Ridiculous!"

A man rejoined:

"Watch me jump in a river for a woman."

She took Belvigne by the arm, saying:

"You missed your chance."

They came back. The gazers irritated her, and she remarked:

"How stupid all these people look!"

Staring at De Belvigne, she continued:

"You, too."

## YVETTE

M. de Belvigne bowed. She noticed that the prince and chevalier had disappeared. Servigny, mournful and dripping wet, was taciturn, and the other two were also mute.

She laughed dryly.

"You have enough, it seems. That's what you call having great fun, isn't it? You came for that; I gave you your money's worth."

She, too, walked silently; but suddenly Belvigne noticed that she was crying. Moved himself, he inquired:

"What's the matter?"

She murmured:

"Leave me alone; it's none of your business."

But, like a fool, he insisted:

"Oh, mademoiselle, what is it? Has some one hurt you?"

She repeated impatiently:

"Keep still!"

Then, no longer able to control herself, she burst into tears.

She shook throughout her body, so violent were her sobs, seemingly choked and suffocated by them.

Belvigne was at a loss as to what to do, repeating: "I don't know what to do."

Servigny advanced.

"Let's go back, mam'zelle. Don't let any one see you weeping. Why do you do such foolish things, if they make you sad?"

And he dragged her home gently, where she broke away from him and locked herself in her room.

She reappeared at dinner, very pale and serious. Every one was happy, though. Servigny was dressed as a workman and spoke just like one

## YVETTE

throughout the whole meal; his slang kept every one hilarious.

Yvette was anxious to arrive at the end of the supper, feeling her courage wane. Immediately after the coffee had been served she retired.

She heard joyous voices under her. The chevalier was trying to amuse the company.

She listened to it all. Servigny, slightly gay himself, imitated the drunken workman; called the marquise the boss, and, all of a sudden, said to Saval:

"Hey, boss!"

All joined in a fit of laughter.

Yvette was not decided. She first took out a sheet of paper and wrote:

"BOUGIVAL, Sunday, 9 P.M.

"I died so as not to become wicked."

Then, in postscript:

"Adieu, dear mother; forgive me."

She sealed the envelope and wrote her mother's name on it.

Then she placed her long chair near the window and a table with the bottle of chloroform upon it.

Yvette was saying to herself:

"I am going to die! I'm going to die!" Her heart seemed to be about to burst, so violently did she sob, although she tried desperately not to. She felt, for a moment, the need of being saved and loved.

Servigny's voice came up to her. He was telling

## YVETTE

stories which made every one laugh. The marquise seemed the happiest. She repeated all the time:

"Oh, how comical! How comical!"

Yvette poured some chloroform on a piece of cotton. A powerful, sweet, strange odor filled the room; she approached the wet cotton to her lips and inhaled the fumes in long draughts.

At first it seemed to her that her lungs were becoming inflated, and that her soul, heavy with grief a little while ago, was becoming light, as if the weight that had oppressed her had taken flight.

An agreeable sensation took hold of her, and she felt herself rocked by a light fever into a sea of gentle dizziness.

She noticed that the cotton was dry, and was astonished not to have died yet. Her senses seemed to be more acute, subtle, alert.

Not a word that was said below escaped her ears. Prince Kravalow was telling how he killed in a duel an Austrian general.

She again moistened the cotton and inhaled more of the fumes. For a few instants she felt nothing; then the former sensation of comfort seized her again.

Twice she repeated this manoeuvre, for she was coming to like this physical and moral sensation of torpor in which her soul wandered happily, as it were.

It seemed to her that she had neither bones, nor flesh, nor limbs. They must have been taken away without her noticing it. The chloroform had emptied her body, leaving only her thinking powers more awake and keener than she ever had known them to be.

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She remembered a thousand things, details of her childhood, little nothings that pleased her. Her mind, suddenly become most active, touched upon ideas of the most different nature; meandered through the past and lost itself in former future hopes. Her thought gave her a sensual pleasure. She was under the charm of a divine happiness. She was sinking and disappearing in a sort of strange fairyland.

She was on a large boat that passed by a country deluged with flowers. She saw people on the shore, who spoke very loud, and then she was on land again, she knew not how; Servigny, as a prince, came to escort her to a bull-fight.

Then everything became vague.

Finally she woke up, deliciously benumbed, and had some difficulty to remember where she was.

She was not dead yet.

She was so happy, so comfortable, she was not all in a hurry to put an end to this wellbeing! She would have liked to prolong the duration of the present sensation.

She breathed slowly and watched the moon in front of her, beyond the trees. Something was changed in her mind. She thought differently. The chloroform, in deadening her body and soul, had calmed her sufferings and weakened her wish to die.

Why should she not live? Why should she not be loved? Be happy? Everything was possible and easy now. Everything in life was good and charming. But, as she wanted to dream as long as possible, she used some more of the liquid, but this time with the precaution of avoiding the poisoning effect of the drug.

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She gazed at the moon and saw a face in it, that of a woman. She was in the same state as if she had absorbed opium. This face was swinging to and fro in the heavens; it sang, sang with a well-known voice the *Alleluia d'Amour*.

It was the marquise, who had just gone to the piano.

Yvette had wings now. She flew, on a beautiful, clear night, above woods and rivers. She rolled herself in the air that caressed her body and went at such a speed that she saw nothing under her, and then she found herself fishing in a lake.

Something resisted, but she pulled so hard that she finally drew a beautiful pearl necklace, which she had wanted for ever so long a time. She was not astonished at this, for she saw Servigny, who was on the other bank, just drawing out of the water a wooden horse.

Then she felt herself awakening again and heard some one calling her.

Her mother was saying:

"Put out your candle."

Servigny repeated comically:

"Put out your candle, Mam'zelle Yvette."

They all repeated it in a chorus:

"Mam'zelle Yvette, put out your candle."

She again poured the liquid in the cotton and breathed the odor, though she took care to escape the mortal properties it might contain. She then took an abandoned position, as if dead, and waited, for she knew that they were going to come up and see what was the matter.

The marquise was saying:

"I'm rather anxious. That little fool went asleep

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without putting out her candle. I'll send Clémence to put it out and shut the window."

Soon the chambermaid knocked at the door.

"Mademoiselle, mademoiselle!"

After a moment's silence, she said:

"Madame la marquise, your mother, wants you to put out the candle and shut the window."

Clémence waited a while and repeated,

"Mademoiselle, mademoiselle!"

As she did not answer, the servant went to the marquise and said:

"Mademoiselle must be asleep. She has locked herself up and cannot be awakened."

Madame Obardi at once replied:

"But she shall not stay like that."

Then Servigny suggested that they all shout together: "Hip—hip—hurrah—Mam'zelle Yvette!"

As Yvette did not answer, the marquise said:

"I hope nothing has happened; I'm growing anxious."

Servigny picked a few roses and threw them into her room by the open window.

The first one almost made her jump and cry out. But the others fell upon, around her, without her moving.

The marquise shouted in a choked voice:

"Yvette, why don't you answer?"

Servigny declared:

"That's not natural. I'm going to climb up to the balcony."

The chevalier became indignant.

"Here, here, that's a favor which I wish to claim for myself; that would be too much of an advantage over us—to obtain a—rendezvous."

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The others, who thought it was a prank on the young girl's part, cried:

"We protest. It's a put-up game."

But the marquise, who was anxious, repeated:

"Still, we'll have to see what's the matter."

The prince declared dramatically:

"She favors the duke; we are betrayed."

"Let's toss up," said the chevalier.

He drew a hundred-franc piece. He began with the prince.

"Tails," said he.

It was a head.

The prince threw the coin, and said to Saval in turn:

"Call, sir."

Saval called heads.

It was a tail.

The prince, with the others, likewise.

Servigny declared insolently:

"Oh, he cheats!"

The Russian protested, and gave the piece to Servigny, who threw it up, crying:

"Heads!"

It was the reverse.

He bowed, indicated the pillar, and said:

"Go up, prince."

But the prince looked around, apparently worried.

"What are you looking for?" said the chevalier.

"I should like—a—a ladder."

A peal of laughter broke forth. Saval advanced, saying:

"We'll help you."

He took him in his giant's arms, suggesting:

"Hang on to the balcony."

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He did so, and remained suspended, kicking desperately in the air.

Then Servigny pulled on his legs and dragged him down.

"Whose turn?" he asked.

"Come, Belvigne, a little courage."

"I like my bones too well."

"Chevalier, you ought to be able to climb."

"You may take my place, duke."

"Hm-m, hm-m, I don't know that I'm over eager."

At the same time Servigny was turning around the pillar.

Then with a leap he obtained a good hold on the balcony, raised himself, and jumped over the railing.

All applauded. But he reappeared instantly, crying:

"Come quickly! Yvette is unconscious!"

The daughter of the marquise was pretending to be dead. Madame Obardi, affrighted, threw her arms about her.

"What's the matter with her? What's the matter with her, say?" she stuttered.

Servigny picked the bottle of chloroform from the floor.

"She's asphyxiated."

He listened to her heart, and added:

"But she's not dead; we'll revive her. Get some ammonia."

The chambermaid, in her agitation, could not understand, and repeated:

"What, sir? What, sir? What?"

"Sedative water."

"Yes, sir."

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"Bring it immediately, and let some air in. Open the door!"

The marquise was on her knees, sobbing:

"Yvette, my daughter, my precious one, listen to me. Answer, Yvette, my child. Oh! what's the matter with her?"

The men, thoroughly beside themselves, moved around, doing nothing of any use, except bringing towels, water and vinegar.

Some one said: "Undress her."

The marquise, almost unconscious of her acts, tried to do so, but she was unable to. Her hands trembled, got mixed up in the girl's garments, and she groaned:

"I cannot, I cannot!"

The servant came in the room bringing the sedative water, which Servigny poured into a handkerchief, then put it under Yvette's nose, and she almost suffocated.

"She's breathing," said he. "It will not amount to anything."

The chambermaid having undressed her, he carried her to the bed.

When she was placed in it comfortably, he rose very pale.

"She'll come to in a little while," said he. For he had heard her breathing normally. But, seeing the men eagerly staring at her, a jealous irritation prompted him to say:

"Gentlemen, there are too many of us in here; leave the marquise, Saval and me to take care of Yvette."

He spoke with a dry air of authority. The others went out immediately.

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Madame Obardi threw herself into her lover's arms, and said:

"Save her—save her!"

Servigny at that moment caught a glimpse of the letter, which he seized rapidly, feeling instinctively that the marquise ought not to see it.

He read its contents.

"That's curious. It needs thought."

He hid the letter in his pocket.

Then it struck him that the young woman was better, but she was ashamed to show it, fearing to be questioned.

The marquise was on her knees, near the foot of the bed, and was weeping. All of a sudden she cried: "She needs a doctor!"

But Servigny, who had just said a few words to Saval, answered: "Just leave her a minute with me, and she will kiss you when you return." The baron took her away.

Servigny sat near her, and said: "Mam'zelle Yvette, listen to me."

She did not answer. She felt so comfortable in her bed that she never wished to move again. She had never been so comfortable.

The warm air came in through the window in light breezes, and whisked over her face in an imperceptible and exquisite manner. It was a caress, something like a kiss of the wind, or the breath of a fan, made up of the leaves and trees of the woods, the shadows of the night, and the vapor of the rivers, and of the flowers, too, for the roses, thrown in the room, mingled their sweet and healthful odor.

And she drank this air in, in long draughts, no longer desirous to die, but possessed of a strong

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will to live, be happy, above all, to be loved, yes, loved.

Servigny reiterated:

"Mam'zelle Yvette, please listen."

She finally decided to open her eyes. He continued, seeing she was revived:

"Why such foolish, rash acts?"

She murmured:

"My poor Muscade, I had so much grief."

He squeezed her hand in a paternal manner.

"That only made matters worse. Now, promise never to try it again."

She did not answer, but she made a movement to smile, which was more to be felt, by the nod of her head, then seen.

He pulled out the letter he had found on the table.

"Must your mother see this?"

She shook her head.

He did not know what else to say, for the situation seemed to be without an issue. He murmured:

"You must put up with terrible things in this world. I understand your grief, and I promise—"

"You are too good."

They were silent. He was looking at her. She seemed to be moved to tenderness; and suddenly she opened both her arms, as if to attract him toward her. He bent over her, feeling she was calling him; their lips were united.

They remained thus for a long time. But he felt he was losing control of himself, so rose for a few seconds. She smiled tenderly at him now; and

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with her two arms clasped on his shoulders she brought him back.

"I'm going to call your mother," said he.

After another silence, she said so low that he hardly heard her:

"You'll love me sincerely?"

He kneeled before the bed, and, kissing her wrist, said:

"I adore you."

But some one was near the door. He leaped up and said, in his ordinary voice, which always seemed slightly ironical:

"You can come in now. It's all over now."

The marquise opened wide her arms and frantically embraced her daughter, whose face she moistened with her tears, while the radiant Servigny went to the window to breathe some fresh air, humming to himself the famous song from *Rigoletto*, *La donna e mobile*.

# THE HERITAGE

## PART I

**A**LTHOUGH it was not yet ten o'clock, the clerks were pouring in through the building of the Ministry of Marine, hastening from all corners of Paris, for New Year's Day, the time for zeal and promotion, was approaching. The noise of hurried footsteps filled the vast building, which was pierced by countless doors giving entry to the different offices.

Each man entered his compartment, shaking hands with those who had already arrived, took off his jacket and put on his office coat; then he sat down at his desk, where a pile of papers awaited him. Then the clerks visited one another to learn the news. They first asked whether the manager was there, whether he appeared to be in good humor, whether the mail was large.

The order clerk for "general business," M. César Cachelin, a former non-commissioned officer of marines who had become head clerk through length of service, was registering in a large book everything the ushers brought in. Opposite him the copying clerk, Old Man Savon, who was known throughout the whole ministry for his conjugal troubles, was slowly copying a message from the man-

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ager, his body bent, looking from the corner of his eye in the stiff position of an accurate copyist.

M. Cachelin, a fat man with short, straight white hair, was talking while accomplishing his daily task: "Thirty-two dispatches from Toulon. We get as many from that port as we do from any other four put together." Then he asked Old Man Savon the question he asked him every morning: "Well, papa, how's the missus?"

The old man answered without interrupting his work: "Monsieur Cachelin, you know that this subject is very distasteful to me."

And the order clerk began to laugh, just as he laughed every day when he heard this same sentence.

The door opened and M. Maze entered. He was a dark, handsome fellow, who dressed with exaggerated elegance, and considered his physique and manners far above the position he occupied. He wore large rings, a heavy watch chain, a monocle, for style, as he took it off to work, and he had a peculiar motion of his wrists in order to show his cuffs, decorated with big china cuff-buttons.

As soon as he reached the door he asked: "Is there much work to-day?" M. Cachelin answered: "The most still comes from Toulon. It's easy to see that New Year's Day is approaching; they are very busy over there."

Another clerk, M. Pitolet, a joker and a witty fellow, appeared in turn, and laughingly asked: "And do you think that we are not busy here?"

Then, drawing his watch, he declared: "Seven minutes to ten, and everybody here! And I'll wager that His Dignity, Monsieur Lesable was here at

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nine o'clock, at the same time as our illustrious manager."

The order clerk stopped writing, put his pen behind his ear, and leaning over the desk, said: "Oh, if that fellow doesn't succeed it won't be because he does not try."

M. Pitolet, sitting on the corner of the table and swinging his legs, answered: "But he will succeed, Papa Cachelin; you may be sure that he will succeed. I'll bet twenty francs to one sou that he will be manager inside of ten years!"

M. Maze, who was rolling a cigarette and warming his legs at the fire, exclaimed: "Bah! Personally, I should prefer to work the rest of my life for twenty-four hundred francs rather than to kill myself the way he is doing."

Pitolet turned on his heel and answered in a mocking tone: "Nevertheless, my dear fellow, this day, the twentieth of December, you are here before ten o'clock."

The other merely shrugged his shoulders indifferently, saying: "Of course, I have no desire for everybody to pass over my head. As long as you come here in time to see the sun rise I will do as much, although I deplore your zeal. Between that and calling the manager 'dear master,' as Lesable does, and leaving at half-past six and taking work home with him, there is quite a difference. Besides, I belong to society, and I have other obligations that take up my time."

M. Cachelin had stopped registering, and was dreaming, with his looks lost in the distance. Finally he asked: "Do you think that he will be promoted again this year?"

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Pitolet answered: "I should say he would. He's not clever for nothing."

The conversation turned to the eternal topic of promotion and gratuities, which had been occupying this great hive of government clerks from the first floor to the roof. They computed chances, guessed at amounts, weighed merits, and indignation was expressed over foreseen injustice. Discussions left off the day before were continued, and they would be taken up again the following day with the same reasoning, the same arguments and the same words.

A new clerk entered, small, pale, delicate-looking. It was M. Boissel, who lived as in a novel by Alexander Dumas, Sr. Everything for him became an extraordinary adventure, and every morning he would relate to Pitolet strange things that had occurred to him the evening before, imaginary tragedies in his house, weird cries in the street, which had made him open his window at twenty minutes past three in the morning. Every day he had separated two men fighting, stopped runaway horses, saved women in danger, and although he was deplorably weak he would continually boast of the exploits which he had accomplished with the strength of his arms.

As soon as he understood that they were talking of Lesable he exclaimed: "Ah! some day I'm going to tell that rascal what I think of him, and if he gets promoted before I do I'll shake him up so that he'll never want to do so again!"

Maze, who was smoking, grinned, saying: "You would do well to begin to-day, for I have good in-

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formation that you are to be set aside this year to give way to Lesable."

Boissel raised his hand, exclaiming: "I swear that if——"

The door once more opened, and a little man with side whiskers like a marine officer or a lawyer, with a very high collar, who rattled off his words as if he never could find time to finish what he had to say, entered with a preoccupied air. He shook hands like a man whose time is not his own. Going up to the order clerk, he said: "My dear Cachelin, will you give me the Chapelou file, Toulon, A. T. V. 1875?"

The clerk stood up and reached for a book above his head. From it he took a package wrapped up in a blue shirt, and presented it, saying: "Here, Monsieur Lesable. I suppose you are aware that the manager took three dispatches from this file yesterday?"

"Yes, I have them, thank you."

The young man left again with a hurried step. He was hardly out of sight when Maze exclaimed: "What style! He looks as if he were already manager."

Pitolet replied: "Patience! patience! He will be manager before you are."

M. Cachelin had not resumed his writing. He looked as if something were worrying him. At last he exclaimed: "That fellow has a wonderful future."

Maze murmured in a disdainful tone: "I suppose he has—for those who consider the ministry a career; for others—it's not very much."

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Pitolet interrupted him: "Perhaps you intend to become ambassador?"

The other made an impatient gesture: "As far as I am concerned I don't care. But I will maintain that the position of office manager will never amount to anything in the world."

Father Savon, the copying clerk, had not stopped working. But for the last few minutes he had dipped his pen in the ink several times in succession, and then obstinately wiped it on the damp sponge, without being able to trace a single letter. The black liquid ran down along the metal point and fell in round blots on the paper. The old man, astonished and in despair, looked at the dispatch he was copying, which he would have to do over again, as he had been forced to do so many others in the last few days; and he said in a low, sad voice: "There's some more adulterated ink."

A burst of laughter followed this exclamation. Cachelin was shaking the table; Maze was bent in two, as if he were about to enter the chimney backward; Pitolet was stamping, coughing, waving his right hand around as if it were wet, and Boissel himself was choking, although he usually took things tragically rather than otherwise.

But Old Man Savon wiped his pen on the end of his coat and continued: "There is no cause for laughter. I am obliged to do my work over two or three times."

He drew another sheet of paper from his portfolio, adjusted the carbon, and began: "Monsieur le Minister and dear colleague. . ." The pen now held the ink and clearly traced the letters. The

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old man took up his pose again and continued copying.

The others had not stopped laughing. They were choking. This had been happening for the last six months, and the old man could never see the joke that they were playing on him. It consisted in pouring a few drops of oil on the damp sponge. The steel was thus covered with a greasy liquid, and no longer held the ink; then the old clerk would spend hours in bemoaning his troubles, using up whole boxes of pens and bottles of ink; and at last he would declare that the office supplies were altogether inferior.

Then the joking was turned into a regular obsession and torture. Gunpowder was mixed in the old man's snuff, drugs were poured into the water of which he took a glass from time to time, and they made him believe that since the Commune the majority of materials in daily use had been thus adulterated by the socialists in order to harm the government and bring about a revolution.

As a result he had conceived a fierce hatred against anarchists, whom he believed to be ambushed everywhere, and he had a mysterious fear of some unknown and terrible person.

A bell rang sharply in the hall. This angry ring of the manager, M. Torchebeuf, was well known, and every one rushed for his own door in order to reach his compartment.

Cachelin began to register again, then he put his pen down and took his head in his hands, in order to think.

He was ruminating over an idea which had been worrying him for some time. An old non-commis-

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sioned officer, retired after receiving three wounds, one in Senegal and two in Cochin China, and appointed to the ministry as an exceptional favor, he had been forced to endure many hardships, griefs and miseries in his long career of subordinate; therefore he considered authority—official authority—as the finest thing in the world. An office manager seemed to him to be a superior being, living in a sphere of his own; and those clerks of whom he heard people say, "He is shrewd, he will advance quickly," seemed to him to belong to another race, to be of an entirely different nature from his own.

He therefore looked upon his colleague, Lesable, with a superior consideration which bordered upon veneration, and he harbored the secret and persistent desire of seeing him marry his daughter. She would be rich some day, very rich. This was known throughout the ministry, for his sister, Mademoiselle Cachelin, was worth a million—a whole solid, intact million—acquired by love, it was said, but purified by devotion. The old maid had led a gay life and had retired with five hundred thousand francs, which she had more than doubled in eighteen years, thanks to a rigid economy and to tastes which were more than frugal. She had been living for a long time with her brother, who was a widower with one child, a young girl, Coralie; but she contributed only a very little to the household expenses, hoarding and increasing her gold and continually repeating to Cachelin: "That makes no difference, since it's for your daughter; but marry her off quickly, because I wish to see grand-nephews. It is she who will give me the joy of embracing a child of her own blood."

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The thing was known throughout the office, and there was no lack of suitors. It was even said that Maze himself, the handsome Maze, the pride of the office, was hanging round Old Man Cachelin with a visible intention. But the old sergeant, a man who had traveled under many suns, wanted a man with a future, a man who would become a manager and who would reflect glory on him, César, the old non-com. Lesable would suit him admirably, and he had been trying for a long time to attract him to his house. Suddenly he straightened up, rubbing his hands. He had found a way.

He knew every one's weakness. Lesable could be captured only by professional vanity. He would go to him and ask him for protection, just as one goes to a senator, or to a deputy, or to some other person of high rank.

As he had not had an increase of salary for twelve years, Cachelin considered himself pretty certain of obtaining one this year. He would therefore pretend to believe that he owed it to Lesable, and then in return he would invite him to dinner.

As soon as his plan was conceived he began to carry it out. He took off his office coat, drew on his street jacket, and, taking all the registered matter which belonged to his colleague's business, he hastened to the office which this clerk occupied by himself by special favor as a reward for his zeal and valuable services.

The young man was writing at a large table on which lay open files and papers numbered in red or blue ink. As soon as he saw the order clerk enter, he asked in a familiar tone, wherein a certain con-

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sideration could be noticed: "Well, my dear fellow, are you bringing me much business?"

"Yes, quite a little. And then I would like to speak to you."

"Sit down, my friend; I am listening."

Cachelin sat down, coughed, looked worried and exclaimed in a shaky voice: "Monsieur Lesable, this is what is bringing me. I will come straight to the point. I will be perfectly frank, as an old soldier should be. I have come to ask a small service of you."

"What is it?"

"To cut a long story short, I need an increase of salary this year. I have no one to protect me, and I thought of you."

Lesable blushed a little, surprised, pleased, full of vain confusion. Nevertheless he answered: "But I am nobody here, my friend. I am much less than you, who will some time be head clerk. I can do nothing. Believe me——"

Cachelin interrupted him with a respectful brusqueness: "Tut, tut! The chief will listen to you, and if you will only say a word for me all will go well. Just think! I am entitled to my pension in eighteen months, and it will mean five hundred francs less if I get nothing on the first of January. I know that every one says 'Cachelin is well off; his sister is worth a million.' That may be; my sister may have a million, and it grows, but I get none of it. It's for my daughter, that's true, but my daughter and I are two different persons. A deal of good it will do me to see my daughter and my son-in-law traveling about in a coach and four when

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I have nothing in my stomach. You understand the situation, don't you?"

Lesable immediately answered: "That's true, quite true—what you say. Your son-in-law may not be well disposed toward you. And, anyhow, one always feels more comfortable not to owe anything to any one. I have promised to do my best for you. I will speak to the manager and explain your case to him. You may count on me!"

Cachelin arose, took his colleague's hands, pressed and shook them in a military manner, mumbling: "Thank you, thank you! You may count on me if the occasion ever—if I can ever—" He did not finish, as he did not find any good ending for his sentence; and he walked away with the rhythmic tread of an old soldier. But in the distance he heard the angry ringing of a bell, and he began to run, for he had recognized it. It was the chief, M. Torchebeuf, who was ringing for his order clerk.

A week later Cachelin found the following note in his mail:

"MY DEAR COLLEAGUE: I am pleased to announce to you that the Minister, on the recommendation of your director and our chief, yesterday signed your nomination as chief clerk. To-morrow you will receive the official notification. Until then you know nothing, do you? Very respectfully yours,

"LESABLE."

César immediately ran to his young colleague's office, thanked him profusely, offered his eternal devotion and overwhelmed him with gratitude.

On the following day it became known that MM.

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Lesable and Cachelin had both been promoted. All the other employés would have to wait for another year and as compensation would receive a gratuity which varied from five to three hundred francs.

M. Boissel declared that he would lie in wait for Lesable at the corner of his street at midnight some night and give him such a thrashing that he never would forget. The other clerks were silent.

The following Monday, as soon as Cachelin arrived, he went to his protector's office, entered solemnly and said in a ceremonious tone: "I hope that you will do us the honor of dining with us during Epiphany. You may choose your own day."

The young man, a little surprised, raised his head and looked at his colleague. Then he answered without turning his eyes away, in order better to read the other man's thought: "But, my friend, I—all my evenings are taken up for some time."

Cachelin insisted in a good-humored tone: "Oh, you wouldn't refuse us after the service which you have just rendered me. I beg of you for my own sake and that of my family not to refuse."

Lesable hesitated, perplexed. He had understood, but he did not know what to answer, as he had not had time to think the matter over and to weigh the pros and cons. At last he thought: "I am not taking any risk by going to dinner"; and he accepted with a satisfied look, naming the following Saturday. He added, smiling: "So that I shall not have to get up too early the following day."

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### PART II

M. Cachelin lived in a little apartment on the fifth floor of a building at the upper end of the Rue Rochechouart. It had a balcony, from which one could see the whole of Paris. There were three bedrooms, one for his sister, one for his daughter and one for himself; the dining-room was used also as a drawing-room. During the whole week he was busy making preparations for this dinner. The *menu* was discussed at great length, to order to have a dinner that would be substantial and at the same time choice. The following dishes were decided upon: A consommé with eggs, relishes, shrimps, sausages, lobster, a fine chicken, some canned peas, *pâté de foies gras*, a salad, ices and dessert.

The *pâté* was bought from a neighboring delicatessen shop, with the recommendation to have it of the best. It cost three francs fifty. As for the wine, Cachelin applied to the wine merchant of the corner, who supplied him with the red beverage with which he ordinarily quenched his thirst. He did not wish to go to some large establishment, giving the following reason: "The little retailers find few occasions to sell their good wines. For this reason they are kept very long in the cellar, and they become very fine."

He returned home early on Saturday to make sure that everything was ready. His servant, who opened the door, was as red as a beet, for her oven, which had been lighted since noon for fear that she would not be ready, had roasted her face all day; emotion had also played its part.

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He entered the dining-room in order to look over things. In the middle of a little room a round table made a big white patch under the bright light of a lamp covered with a green shade. On the four plates lay napkins folded like a bishop's miter by Mademoiselle Cachelin, the aunt, and on either side were knives and forks of plated metal and two glasses, one large and one small. César found this insufficient and called: "Charlotte!"

A door to the left opened and a little old lady appeared. She was ten years older than her brother, and she had a narrow face framed by white hairs which was made wavy by curl papers. Her thin voice seemed too weak for her bent body, and she walked with a slightly dragging step and tired gestures.

When she was young they had said of her: "What a dainty little creature!"

She was now a thin old woman, very neat, as a result of her early training, headstrong, stubborn, narrow-minded, precise and easily irritated. She had become very pious and seemed completely to have forgotten the adventures of bygone days. She said: "What do you want?"

He answered: "I don't think the two glasses make much effect. Suppose we were to serve a little champagne. It would not cost more than three or four francs, and we could put on the thin glasses. It would entirely change the appearance of the table."

Mamemoiselle Charlotte continued: "I don't see the use of all this expense. But as you are the one who is paying for it, it is none of my business."

He hesitated and tried to convince himself by

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saying: "I assure you that it will be much better and that it will brighten us up a little for the Twelfth-Night cake." It was this argument that decided him. He took his hat and went downstairs again, and after five minutes he returned with a bottle having on its side a large white label with fancy ornaments bearing the following inscription: "*Grand vin mousseux de Champagne du Comte de Chatel-Rénovau,*" and Cachelin declared: "It cost me only three francs, and they say it is excellent."

He took the glasses out of the cupboard and placed them on the table.

The door to the right opened. His daughter entered. She was a tall, plump, rosy, handsome girl, with brown hair and blue eyes. A simple dress outlined her well-rounded and supple figure; her strong voice was almost manly and had those deep tones which make the nerves tingle. She exclaimed: "Gracious! champagne! What joy!" And she clapped her hands in childlike glee.

Her father said to her: "I wish you to be especially agreeable to this gentleman, who has done me a great favor."

She began to laugh a sonorous laugh, which seemed to say: "I know all about it."

The front doorbell rang; doors were opened and closed. Lesable appeared. He wore evening dress, a white cravat and white gloves. He produced quite a sensation. Cachelin had sprung forward, confused and delighted, exclaiming: "But, my friend, this was to be entirely informal; you see I am wearing my business suit."

The young man answered: "I know, you told me, but I am always accustomed to dress in the eve-

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ning." He bowed to every one, his opera hat under his arm, a flower in his buttonhole. César introduced him: "My sister, Mademoiselle Charlotte—my daughter, Coralie, whom we familiarly call Cora."

Everybody bowed. Cachelin continued: "We have no drawing-room. It's a little annoying, but we are used to it."

"It's charming!" Lesable replied.

They relieved him of his hat, which he wished to keep. Then he began to take off his gloves. Everybody was seated; they were observing him across the table in silence. Cachelin asked: "Did the chief stay late? I left a little early in order to help the ladies."

Lesable answered in an offhand manner: "No. We left together, as we had to discuss the matter of the tarpaulin for Brest. It's a very complicated affair, and is going to give us much trouble."

Cachelin turned to his sister and informed her: "It is Monsieur Lesable who takes care of all the difficult matters of the office. He is the manager's right-hand man."

The old maid bowed politely and declared: "Oh, I know that monsieur is very capable."

The servant entered, pushing the door with her knee and holding in the air a large tureen of soup. Then the host cried: "Come! let us sit down! If you will place yourself there, Monsieur Lesable, between my sister and my daughter. I suppose that you are not afraid of the ladies." And dinner began.

Lesable tried to be amiable, with a little air of conceit, almost of condescension, and he kept looking at the young girl from the corner of his eye,

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marveling at her freshness and her attractive air of health. Mademoiselle Charlotte tried to be pleasant, knowing the intentions of her brother, and she carried on the commonplace conversation on all the ordinary subjects of the day. Cachelin, delighted, was talking loudly, joking, pouring out the wine that he had bought an hour before at the wine merchant's at the corner, saying; "A small glass of this Burgundy, Monsieur Lesable? I don't claim that it's of a great vintage, but it is good. It has been kept quite a time in the cellar, and it is pure—I guarantee that. We get it from friends who live there."

The young girl said nothing, blushing slightly, a little timid, embarrassed by the proximity of this man, whose thoughts she suspected.

When the lobster appeared César declared: "There is a person whose acquaintance I shall make with pleasure." Lesable smiled and told of an author who called the lobster "the cardinal of the seas," not knowing that this animal was red only when cooked. Cachelin began to laugh with all his might, repeating: "Ha! ha! ha! that's a good one!" But Mademoiselle Charlotte became furious and cried: "I can't see what comparison could have been drawn. That gentleman was very improper. I can appreciate any kind of joke, but I refuse to have the clergy made ridiculous in my presence."

The young man, who wished to please the old maid, took advantage of the occasion to express his belief in the Catholic faith. He spoke of the bad taste of people who speak lightly of great truths. And he concluded by saying: "I respect and revere

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the religion of my forefathers. I have been brought up in it, and I shall stick to it until death."

Cachelin was no longer laughing. He was rolling pellets of bread and murmuring: "Quite right, quite right!" Then he changed the conversation, which was boring him, and with the bent of mind natural to those who do the same work every day, he exclaimed: "How angry the handsome Maze must have been not to get his promotion!"

Lesable smiled, saying: "What can you expect? Every one gets awarded according to what he does." And the conversation turned on the ministry, a topic which delighted everybody, as the women knew almost as much about the clerks as Cachelin himself, as they had heard about them every evening. Mademoiselle Charlotte took a great interest in Boissel, on account of the adventures which he told and of his romantic spirit. Mademoiselle Cora took a secret interest in the handsome Maze. Neither of them had ever seen these people. Lesable spoke of them with a certain tone of superiority, just as a minister might speak when passing judgment on his employés. All were listening to him as he was saying: "Maze has indeed a certain merit, but if he wishes to arrive he will have to work harder. He likes society and pleasure—all that distracts the mind. He never will get far, through his own fault. He may perhaps get to be assistant manager, thanks to some outside influence, but nothing more. As for Pitolet, I must admit that he does his work well, but he has no depth. Everything is on the surface with him. He is the kind of fellow who never could be put at the head of anything important, but who

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could be well made use of by an intelligent chief who could prepare all his work for him."

Mademoiselle Charlotte asked: "And how about Monsieur Boissel?"

Lesable shrugged his shoulders and answered: "A sorry chap, a sorry chap! He can see nothing in its correct proportions. He imagines wild-goose stories. He is of absolutely no use to us."

Cachelin began to laugh and declared: "But the best of all is Father Savon." And everybody laughed.

Then the conversation turned on the theaters and the plays. Lesable criticized dramatic literature with the same tone of authority, classifying the authors clearly, picking out the strong and the weak points of each one with the assurance of a man who considers himself infallible and universal.

The roast had been taken off. César was now taking the crust from the *foies gras* with the utmost precaution, in order to give a good opinion of the contents. He said: "I don't know how this one is going to be. But they are usually perfect. We receive them from a cousin who lives in Strasburg." Each one ate the little delicacy from the yellow jar with respectful deliberation.

When the ice appeared it was a disaster. It had melted to a sauce, a soup, a clear liquid floating around in the dish. The little servant had asked the baker's boy, who had arrived at seven o'clock in the morning, to take it out of the mold himself, for fear that she would not know how to do it. Cachelin, in despair, wished to take it back, but he grew calm at the thought of the Twelfth-Night cake, which he cut with mystery, as if it were a state secret. Each one

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looked at the symbolic cake, and it was passed round with the order for every one to close his eyes while choosing a piece.

Who would draw the bean? A foolish smile was on everybody's face. M. Lesable uttered a little "ah!" of surprise and drew from his mouth a large white bean still covered with pastry. Cachelin began to applaud and then cried: "Choose the queen! choose the queen!"

The king hesitated a little, wondering whether it would not be tactful to choose Mademoiselle Charlotte. She would be flattered and won over to his side! And then he decided that he actually had been invited to meet Mademoiselle Cora and that he would look like a simpleton if he chose the aunt. Therefore he turned to his young neighbor and presented her the symbolic bean, saying: "Mademoiselle, allow me to offer you this!"

They looked each other full in the face for the first time. She said: "Thank you, monsieur!" and received the emblem of dignity.

He was thinking: "This girl is pretty. She has superb eyes. She is a fine specimen of womanhood!" A sharp detonation made both women jump. Cachelin had just uncorked the champagne, which was bubbling over and flooding the table. Then the glasses were filled with froth and the host declared: "It is easy to see that it is of a good quality!" But as Lesable was about to drink in order to stop his glass from overflowing, César cried: "The king drinks! the king drinks! the king drinks!" And Mademoiselle Charlotte, also excited, piped in her shrill voice: "The king drinks! the king drinks!"

Lesable emptied his glass with assurance, and,

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placing it back on the table, he exclaimed: "You see that I am not timid!" Then he turned to Mademoiselle Cora, crying: "Your turn, mademoiselle!"

She wished to drink, but when everybody began to cry, "The queen drinks! the queen drinks!" she blushed, began to laugh and put her glass down in front of her.

The end of the dinner was full of gaiety. The king showed himself attentive and gallant to the queen. When they had taken some cordial Cachelin announced: "The table will be cleared for us. If it is not raining we can go out on the balcony for a while." He wished to show the view, although it was night. He threw open the glass door. A moist breeze entered. It was as warm outside as in the month of April, and every one went up the step which separated the dining-room from the broad balcony. Nothing could be seen but an indistinct light hovering over the great town, like the halos which are placed around the brows of saints. From place to place the light seemed to be a little brighter, and Cachelin began to explain: "You see, that is Eden shining over there. That long line shows the boulevards. How clearly they can be distinguished! In the daytime the view from here is splendid. No matter how far you travel, you will never see anything more beautiful."

Lesable was leaning against the iron railings beside Cora, who was looking out into space, silent, absorbed, suddenly seized by one of those sad languors which at times benumb the soul. Mademoiselle Charlotte returned to the room, fearing the dampness. Cachelin continued to talk, stretching out his arm in order to indicate the directions in

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which could be found the Invalides, the Trocadero, the Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile.

Lesable murmured to Cora: "And you, Mademoiselle Cora, do you like to look at Paris from up here?"

She started as if she had been just waked up and answered: "Oh, yes, especially at night; I think of what is happening out there in front of us, how many happy and unhappy souls there are in all those houses! If we could only see everything, how much we should learn!"

He had drawn closer so that their shoulders were touching and he said: "It must be wonderful on a moonlight evening!"

She murmured: "Yes, indeed. It looks like an engraving by Gustave Doré. How delightful it would be to take a walk on the roofs!"

Then he questioned her about her tastes, her dreams, her pleasures. She answered, without embarrassment, like a quiet, sensible girl who is not too deep. He found her to be full of common sense, and he thought that it would be really delightful to be able to pass his arm round this round, firm waist and to press many short kisses, just as one takes short sips of excellent brandy, on this fresh cheek, near the tip of the ear, on which was reflected the light from a street lamp. He felt himself attracted, moved by this sensation of a woman near him, by this thirst for ripe, pure flesh and by the delicate seductiveness of the young girl. It seemed to him as if he could stand there hours, nights, weeks, forever, leaning near her, feeling her near him, penetrated by the charm of her contact. And something like a poetic sentiment stirred his heart, facing the

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great Paris stretched out in front of him, brilliant with lights, living its nocturnal life of pleasure and revelry. It seemed to him as if he were commanding the enormous city, hovering above her; and he felt that it would be delightful every evening to lean on this balcony, near a woman, to love her, to kiss her lips and to embrace her above the vast city, above all the loves which it enclosed, vulgar satisfaction, all common desires; to feel one's self near the stars.

There are evenings when the least excited souls begin to dream, as if they were growing wings. Perhaps he was a little tipsy.

Cachelin left in order to look for his pipe, and he returned, lighting it. He said: "I know that you do not smoke; that is why I do not offer you any cigarettes. There is nothing better than to smoke one here. If I were on a lower floor I don't believe that I could exist. We could live there if we wished, for the house belongs to my sister, just as do the two neighboring ones, the one to the right and the one to the left. That gives her a pretty good income. These houses were not expensive when she bought them."

Then, turning round toward the room, he cried: "How much did you pay for these rooms, Charlotte?"

The shrill voice of the old maid could be heard. Lesable was able to distinguish only fragments of the conversation: ". . . in eighteen hundred and sixty-three . . . thirty-five francs . . . built later . . . the three houses . . . a banker . . . sold again for at least five hundred thousand francs. . . ."

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She talked about her fortune with the same willingness that an old soldier speaks of his campaigns. She enumerated her purchases, the propositions which had been made to her since, the highest values, etc.

Lesable became quite interested, turned round, and now leaned with his back to the railing of the balcony. But as he continued only to catch snatches of the explanation, he suddenly left his young neighbor and returned to the room in order better to hear. He sat down beside Mademoiselle Charlotte and talked to her at length about the probable increase in rent and of what revenue might be derived from the money if well invested in stocks or real estate.

He left toward midnight, promising to return.

A month later there was no other topic of conversation in the ministry except of the approaching marriage of Jacques-Léopold Lesable with Mademoiselle Céleste-Coralie Cachelin.

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## PART III

The young couple settled down on the same floor with Cachelin and Mademoiselle Charlotte, in an apartment exactly similar to theirs, from which the tenant was ousted.

One matter, however, worried Lesable: The aunt had not been willing to bequeath her property to Cora by any binding act. Nevertheless she had consented to swear "before God" that her will was made and deposited with Maitre Belhomme, her notary. Besides this, she had also promised that her

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whole fortune would be left to her niece, on one condition. Questioned closely as to this condition, she refused to explain, but she had also sworn with a kindly little smile that it was easy to fulfill.

Lesable thought that he ought to take exception to these explanations and to this stubbornness of the devoted old woman, but as the young woman pleased him immensely his desire triumphed over his hesitation, and he succumbed to the persistent efforts of Cachelin.

Now he was happy, although always tormented by one doubt, and he loved his wife, who had in no way belied his expectations. His life continued quiet and monotonous. In a few weeks he had become accustomed to his new position as a married man, and continued to show himself the accomplished clerk that he had always been.

The year rolled by. New Year's Day returned. To his great surprise he did not receive the promotion he expected.

Maze and Pitolet were the only ones to receive advancement, and Boissel confidentially declared to Cachelin that he would thrash his two colleagues some evening when they were leaving the principal entrance, before everybody. He did nothing.

For a whole week Lesable did not sleep as a result of worrying over the fact that he had not been promoted, notwithstanding all his zeal. Nevertheless he was working like a dog; he was replacing for an indefinite time the assistant manager, M. Rabot, who had been ill for the past nine months in the Val-de-Grace Hospital; he arrived every morning at half-past eight and he would not leave until half-past six. What more could they ask for? If they

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did not appreciate such work and efforts, why, he could do as the others did, that's all! Each one according to his deserts. How could M. Torchebeuf, who treated him like a son, have sacrificed him? He wished an explanation. He would go to the chief and have a talk with him.

Therefore one Monday morning, before his comrades arrived, he knocked at the door of this potentate. A sharp voice cried: "Come in!" He entered.

M. Torchebeuf was writing at a large table covered with papers; he was very small, with an enormous head, which seemed almost to be resting on the blotter. When he saw his favorite clerk, he said:

"Good morning, Lesable. How are you?"

The young man answered: "Good morning, dear master; very well, and how are you?"

The chief stopped writing and turned his chair round. His narrow, frail, thin body, enclosed in a black frock-coat of severe cut, seemed quite lost in the big leather chair cushion. An immense, gaudy rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honor, ten times too large for the person who was wearing it, stood out like a red ball on the narrow chest, weighed down by an enormous head, as if the whole being had been developed in the form of a dome, like a mushroom.

The jaw was pointed, the cheeks were hollow, the eyes bulging and the forehead unusually high, with white hair brushed back. "Sit down, my friend," said M. Torchebeuf, "and tell me what brings you here."

Toward all the other employés he showed a military abruptness, considering himself as a captain on his boat, for the ministry represented for him an

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enormous vessel, the flagship of all the French squadrons.

Lesable, a little moved, a little pale, stammered: "Dear master, I have come to ask you whether I have not been faithful in everything?"

"Why, of course, my dear fellow. Why do you ask me such a question?"

"Why, I was a little surprised at not receiving any promotion this year as in previous years. Allow me to explain myself, dear master, and to beg your pardon for my audacity. I know that I have obtained exceptional favors and unexpected advantages from you. I know that promotion is usually given only every two or three years, but allow me to point out that I do about four times the work of an ordinary clerk, and that I work at least twice as long. If the results of my work are weighed against the remuneration which I receive, the former would certainly be found to be far above the latter!"

He had carefully prepared his speech and considered it excellent.

M. Torchebeuf, surprised, was searching for an answer. At last he said, a little coldly: "Although, as a rule, a discussion of such matters between manager and clerk is not admissible, I am willing, for once, to answer you, in view of your very meritorious services.

"I proposed you for promotion just as I have proposed it in preceding years. But the director set your name aside, in view of the fact of your marriage, which assures to you a fine future, more than comfort, a fortune which none of your colleagues can ever expect to obtain. Taken all in all, is it not fair that each one should have his share? You will

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become rich, very rich. Three hundred francs a year will not be much for you, while this little increase would mean much to the others. There, my friend, is the reason why you were left behind this year."

Lesable, confused and irritated, withdrew.

That evening at dinner he was very disagreeable to his wife. She was usually gay and even-tempered, but willful; when she really wished a thing she never gave in. She no longer had for him the sensual charm of the first few days, and, although she could always awaken desire in him, for she was pretty and fresh-looking, he at times felt that disillusion, so close to disgust, that life in common produces in two beings. The thousand trivial or grotesque details of existence, careless morning dressing, slovenly wrappers, faded kimonas—for they were not rich—and all the necessary details of housekeeping when seen from too close, robbed marriage, took away the illusion of marriage, faded that flower of poetry, which, seen from a distance, leads lovers on. Aunt Charlotte made his home most disagreeable, for she no longer left the house; she interfered in everything, wished to boss everything, made remarks about everything, and, as every one was dreadfully afraid of annoying her, she was tolerated with resignation, but also with a growing and secret exasperation. She would walk across the apartment with the dragging step of an old woman and would say in her shrill voice: "You ought to do this, you ought to do that!"

When the couple were alone, Lesable, growing nervous, would exclaim: "Your aunt is becoming unbearable! I'll have nothing more to do with her.

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Do you hear? I'll have nothing more to do with her." And Cora would quietly answer: "What can I do?"

Then he would fly into a rage and say: "It's terrible to have such a family!"

She would answer calmly: "Yes, the family is odious, the family is terrible, but the inheritance is good, isn't it? Don't be a fool! It's as much to your interest as mine to humor Aunt Charlotte."

And he would keep still, not knowing what to answer.

But one morning she did not feel well enough to get up. As she never had been sick, Cachelin, worried, knocked at his son-in-law's door: "Run over to Dr. Barbette. Please also tell the chief that I shall be unable to go to the office to-day, in view of present circumstances."

Lesable was in torture all day, unable to work, write or attend to business. M. Torchebeuf, surprised, asked him: "You seem to be preoccupied to-day, Monsieur Lesable?" And Lesable nervously answered: "I am very tired, dear master. I spent the whole night by our aunt's bedside; she is in a very serious condition."

The manager continued coldly: "As long as Monsieur Cachelin was there, that was sufficient. I do not wish to see my office upset on account of my clerks' personal affairs."

Lesable had placed his watch in front of him on the table, and was awaiting five o'clock with a feverish impatience. As soon as the clock struck in the main hall he made his escape, for the first time leaving the office at the regulation hour. He was so impatient that he even took a cab to return home. He

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ran up the stairs. As the servant opened the door he stammered: "How is she?"

"The doctor says that she is pretty low."

His heart fluttered and he stood still from emotion, asking: "Really?"

Suppose she were to die!

He did not dare enter the sick room, and he sent for Cachelin, who was nursing her. His father-in-law immediately appeared. He was wearing his dressing-gown and a little skull-cap and whispered as he opened the door gently: "She is very low, very low indeed. She has been unconscious for the last four hours. The priest was here during the afternoon."

Lesable began to feel a weakness in his legs and he sat down, asking: "Where is my wife?"

"She is with her aunt."

"Exactly what does the doctor say?"

"He says that it's a stroke. She may recover, but she may also die during the night."

"Do you need me? If you do not, I prefer not to go in. It would be very painful for me to see her in this state."

"No, you need not go in. If there is anything new I will call you immediately."

Lesable returned to his apartment. Everything seemed changed, larger, clearer. But as he could not keep still, he went out on the balcony. It was at the end of July, and the enormous sun, just as it was ready to disappear behind the two towers of the Trocadéro, was pouring out a torrent of fire from the broad, expansive roofs. A broad patch of red at his feet took on, farther up, tints of pale gold, then yellow, then of a delicate green, flecked with

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light, and then finally took on a pure, fresh hue overhead.

Swallows darted like hardy, visible arrows over the crimson sky, and over the infinite crowd of houses and the distant country floated a rose-colored mist into which rose the church steeples and all the tall monuments. The Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile appeared enormous and black, and the dome of the Invalides seemed like another sun which had fallen from celestial heights on the back of another edifice. Lesable was holding the iron railing in his hand and drinking in the air as if it were wine. He was filled with a desire to jump, to cry out aloud and wave his arms; he felt full of a profound and triumphant joy. Life appeared to him in a radiant hue. A future full of happiness! What should he do? And he began to dream.

A slight noise behind him made him start. It was his wife. Her eyes were red and swollen; she looked tired. She held up her forehead for him to kiss and said: "We will eat with father, in order to be near her. While we are eating the servant will stay with her."

He followed her into the neighboring apartment. Cachelin was already seated at the table, awaiting his daughter and his son-in-law. A cold chicken, some potato salad and strawberry jam were on the sideboard; the soup was steaming in the plates. All sat down. Cachelin declared: "I don't care to go through many days like this. It hasn't been very enjoyable." He said this in an indifferent tone and with a self-satisfied look. He began to devour his food with great appetite, finding the chicken excellent and the potato salad delicious.

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But Lesable was worried and ate little; he barely listened to the conversation, as if expecting a sound to come from the neighboring room, which remained perfectly still, however. Cora did not eat, either; she was moved, tearful and kept wiping her eyes from time to time with the corner of her napkin.

"What did the chief say?" Cachelin asked.

Lesable answered him in the most detailed fashion, taking great care not to omit the slightest detail; but this did not satisfy his father-in-law, who continued to ply him with questions, as if he had been away from the ministry for a year and wanted to know the changes that had taken place.

"It must have created quite a sensation when they were told she was ill?" And he began to dream of his sensational re-entry, after her death, and of the questions which would be showered upon him by his colleagues. He said, however, as if to silence a secret remorse: "It isn't that I wish the poor woman any harm! God knows that I should like to have her among us forever, but it will create a sensation, anyhow. Old Man Savon will surely forget the Commune this time—for a few moments, anyway."

They were just beginning to eat the strawberries when the door of the sick chamber was opened. The three diners were instantly upon their feet and remained startled for a few seconds. The little servant appeared with the same impassible and stupid air. She said quietly: "She's stopped breathing."

Cachelin threw his napkin on the table and rushed into the other room like a madman; Cora followed him, her heart beating fast; but Lesable kept near the door and stared at the bed, the white sheets of

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which could hardly be seen in the dim light. He saw his father-in-law leaning over the bed, motionless, and suddenly he heard his voice, which seemed to come from a distance, from a long way off, one of those voices that one hears in dreams, which tell the most astounding things. It said: "It is all over!" He saw his wife fall upon her knees, press her head against the sheets and sob. Then he decided to enter the room, and when Cachelin rose he saw, upon the white pillow-case, Aunt Charlotte's face—her eyes were closed and she looked rigid and pale, like a wax figure.

He inquired anxiously: "Is it all over?"

Cachelin, who was also gazing at his sister, turned toward him and they looked into each other's eyes. He answered "yes," at the same time trying to make his face take on an expression of sorrow, but the two men had penetrated each other's minds at a glance, and without knowing why, they shook hands instinctively, as if to thank each other for mutual services rendered.

Then they lost no time in busying themselves with the many things which have to be done in a house where a death has just occurred.

Lesable went to get the doctor and undertook also to do the other most urgent errands.

He put on his hat and rushed down the stairs, being in a hurry to get to the street and breathe the fresh air, to think freely and enjoy his good luck.

After he had done his various errands he took a stroll on the boulevards, for he was eager now to see many people, to mingle with them and enjoy the gay evening life. He almost wanted to shout at the top of his lungs, so that every one could hear

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him: "I am worth fifty thousand francs a year!" and he walked along, with his hands in his pocket, examining all the show-windows, full of jewels and luxurious furniture, joyfully thinking: "I shall now be able to afford all this."

Suddenly he stopped before a store that made a specialty of the various things used for mourning attire. A vague fear upset him: "What if she were not dead, after all? Suppose they had been mistaken?"

He hurried home, spurred on by the desire to make sure that his fears were not true.

As soon as he arrived he inquired, "Did the doctor come?"

Cachelin answered: "Yes. He has confirmed the decease and said he would file the certificate himself."

They then went into the death chamber. Cora was still weeping, seated in an armchair. She wept softly, almost noiselessly, and with less grief now, but with that facility for tears which is common to all women.

As soon as they were all three alone in the room Cachelin said in low tones: "Now that the servant has retired, let us look to see whether there is anything hidden in the furniture."

The two men set to work. They emptied the drawers, searched all the pockets and unfolded the slightest bit of paper that came into their hands. At midnight they had not yet found anything interesting. Cora had fallen asleep and was snoring in a regular fashion. César inquired: "Shall we remain here until daybreak?" Lesable was perplexed, though he finally decided it would be the proper

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thing to do. The father-in-law then suggested: "Let us bring in a few armchairs," and they made themselves comfortable in two easy-chairs which belonged to the young couple's apartment.

An hour later the three relatives were sleeping and snoring irregularly before the corpse, icy in its eternal immobility.

They woke up next morning when the servant entered the room. Cachelin readily confessed as he rubbed his eyes: "I've been dozing for the last half hour or so."

But Lesable, who immediately regained his composure, said: "Yes, I noticed it. I didn't fall asleep at all; I merely shut my eyes to rest them."

Cora went to her room.

Then Lesable inquired with an air of apparent indifference: "When do you wish to go to the notary's to find out about the will?"

"Why, this morning, if you wish."

"Is it necessary for Cora to accompany us?"

"It would be better, for, after all, she's the heir."

And Lesable went out with his usual quick step.

The offices of Maître Belhomme had just opened when Cachelin, Lesable and his wife presented themselves in deep mourning, with very sad faces.

The notary had them ushered in immediately and offered them seats. Cachelin was the first to speak: "Monsieur, you remember me? I am Mademoiselle Charlotte Cachelin's brother. These are my daughter and my son-in-law. My poor sister died yesterday; we'll bury her to-morrow. As you are the depositary of her will, we come to ask you whether she has not formulated some request relative to her

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burial, or if you have not some communication to make to us."

The notary opened a drawer, took out an envelope, from which he drew a paper, and said: "Here, monsieur, is a duplicate of the will, with the contents of which I shall make you acquainted immediately. The other copy must remain in my hands." And he read:

"I, the undersigned, Victorine-Charlotte Cachelin, here express my last wishes:

"I bequeath my entire fortune, of about a million one hundred and twenty thousand francs, to the children who will be born of the marriage of my niece, Céleste-Coralie Cachelin, the parents to enjoy the interest of the money until the eldest of their descendants is of age.

"The provisions which follow determine the amount belonging to each child and the amount that will belong to the parents during their lifetime.

"In the event of my death before my niece has an heir my entire fortune will remain in the hands of my notary for three years, when my wishes above expressed are to be carried out, if a child is born during that time.

"But should Coralie not obtain from Heaven a descendant during the three years following my death my fortune is to be distributed, by the hands of my notary, among the poor and among the benevolent institutions contained in the following list."

There followed an interminable series of names of institutions, of figures, of commands and directions.

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Maitre Belhomme then politely handed the paper over to Cachelin, who stood dumfounded.

The notary thought he ought to add a few words of explanation: "Mademoiselle Cachelin," said he, "when she did me the honor to speak to me for the first time of her project of making this will, expressed to me her very great desire to see an heir of her race. She replied to all my reasoning by simply stating her wish all the more firmly; this wish was very strong, inasmuch as it was based on a religious conviction of hers that a sterile union was the sign of a divine malediction. I was not able to modify her intentions in the least. Rest assured that I regret it exceedingly." Then he added, smiling as he glanced at Coralie: "I have no doubt that the desire of the defunct will soon be realized."

And the three relatives went away, much too startled to think at all for the present.

They wended their way homeward, side by side, without saying a word, ashamed and furious, as if they had mutually robbed each other. Cora's grief disappeared now, as if her aunt's ingratitude had suddenly dried up her tears. Lesable, whose pale lips were drawn with vexation at this disappointment, said to his father-in-law: "Let me see the paper myself." Cachelin handed it to him, and the young man began to read it. He had stopped walking now and remained on the sidewalk, indifferent to the jostling of the crowd, lost in the perusal of the will, every word of which he studied with a piercing and practical eye. The other two waited silently for him, a few steps away.

Then he said as he handed the paper back: "There

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is nothing to be done. She has fooled us all beautifully."

Cachelin, irritated at this blasting of his hopes, answered: "It was your business to have a child, *sacré bleu!* You knew that she wanted it long ago."

Lesable shrugged his shoulders without answering.

When they reached the house they found it full of people, the people whose business it is to care for the dead. Lesable retired to his room, as if he were through with it all, and César stormed at every one, shouting that he wanted to be let alone, asking them to get through with it all as soon as possible, as he thought they were a long time ridding him of this corpse.

Cora, shut up in her room, did not make the slightest noise. But Cachelin, an hour later, went to rap at his son-in-law's door: "I wish to submit," said he, "a few reflections, for we must come to an understanding about this. My opinion is that we should have an appropriate funeral, so as not to give them any hint at the ministry. We'll settle about the expenses later on. Besides, nothing is lost. You haven't been married long, and it would be a sad thing if you could not have children. Let us see about the most important matters now. Will you go to the ministry? I will address a few envelopes for the invitations to the ceremony."

Lesable admitted that his father-in-law was right, and they set to work at opposite ends of the table and began to fill the blank spaces on the black-bordered cards.

Then they had breakfast. Cora came into the room, perfectly indifferent to everything about her,

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and ate heartily, as she had eaten nothing the evening before.

As soon as she had finished she returned to her room. Lesable left the house to go to the ministry, while Cachelin installed himself on the balcony, in order to enjoy a pipe. The hot sun of a summer day fell perpendicularly upon the multitude of roofs and windows blazed as with fire as they reflected the dazzling rays which blinded one's eyes.

And Cachelin, in his shirt-sleeves, looked upon the green hillsides, far away behind the city and its dusty suburbs. He thought of how the Seine flowed there, broad, calm and fresh, at the foot of the hills which had trees on their slopes, and how much better it would be to lie upon this verdure and gaze into the river than to be sitting on this burning terrace. He was ill at ease, oppressed by an ever-present tormenting thought: the grievous sensation of their disaster, of this unexpected misfortune, all the more bitter and brutal that the hope had been so vivid and tardy in its so ardently desired realization, and he said aloud, as people do in a very perturbed state of mind, "The mean jade!"

Behind him in the bed chamber he heard the undertakers moving about and the continuous noise of the hammer driving the nails into the coffin. He had not seen his sister since his visit to the notary.

Lesable furtively entered the ministry and slipped into his office. He found a piece of paper in his desk containing these words: "The chief wishes to see you." His first movement was one of impatience, of revolt against this despotism which was to place its yoke on him again. Then he was brusquely seized by a desire to get ahead. He would

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be chief, too, and before long; he would even rise higher!

Without taking off his frock-coat, he went at once to M. Torchebeuf. He presented himself with one of those downcast countenances appropriate to sad occasions and also an expression of real dejection caused by violent contradictory emotions.

The enormous head of the chief was bent over a mass of papers. He raised it and asked abruptly: "I needed you all morning. Why didn't you come?" Lesable answered: "Dear master, we have had the misfortune to lose my aunt, Mademoiselle Cachelin, and I was about to ask you to attend the funeral, which will take place to-morrow."

M. Torchebeuf's face was serene again. He answered with a certain shade of consideration: "That's different, my friend. I thank you and give you the day off, for you must have your hands full."

But Lesable wished to show his zeal, and answered quickly: "I thank you, dear master, but as everything has already been done, I expect to remain here until the regular hour for closing."

And he returned to his desk.

The news soon spread, and his fellows came from all the departments to tender him their congratulations rather than their condolences and also to see how he bore it. He endured their speeches and glances with a resigned air worthy of an actor and a tact that surprised them all. "He certainly stands it well," said some. And others added: "He must be jolly well pleased, when all is said and done."

Maze, with his more audacious and careless demeanor of the man of the world, asked him: "Do you know exactly how much she had?"

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Lesabe answered with a perfect imitation of disinterestedness: "No, not precisely. The will says twelve hundred thousand francs. I know that much, because the notary was obliged to give us a few instructions in regard to her burial."

It was the consensus of opinion that Lesable would not remain at the ministry. With a yearly income of sixty thousand francs one does not remain as quill-driver. One is somebody and can become anything one wishes to be. Some thought that he had his eye on the cabinet; others that he hoped to become a deputy some day. The chief was expecting to receive his resignation, which he would hand in to the ministry.

The entire staff of the office came to the obsequies, which were deemed very meager. But it was said: "It was Mademoiselle Cachelin who desired them so. It was in the will."

The next day Cachelin went back to his office, and Lesable, after a week's illness, also returned to his occupation, somewhat pale, but as assiduous and zealous as formerly. One would never have thought that any grave incident had just taken place in their lives. It was merely noticed that they ostentatiously smoked big cigars, spoke of government bonds, railroad dividends, stocks in general, like men who have much money in their possession, and it was learned that they had rented a cottage in one of the suburbs of Paris for the rest of the summer.

Every one thought: "They are just as stingy as the old lady; it's in the family; birds of a feather flock together; but, anyway, it's not right for them to retain their clerkships when they have so much money."

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'After a while the whole affair dropped out of the others' minds. They were rated and classed accordingly.

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### PART IV

Even during the funeral of Aunt Charlotte, Lesable could not help thinking of the million, and his rage being all the more violent because he was obliged to keep it secret, he hated all the world on account of his deplorable misfortune.

He secretly asked himself: "Why didn't I have children in the two years we have been married?" And the fear that his union would be sterile made his heart beat.

Then, just like the boy who sees the glittering prize at the top of the pole and promises himself to reach it by sheer strength and will-power, and to summon up the necessary vigor and tenacity, Lesable desperately resolved to become a father. So many others are, why should not he?

But when he got home again he felt indisposed and was obliged to take to his bed.

The doctor prescribed absolute rest, to be followed later by a certain course of treatment. Brain fever was feared.

Eight days later he was up and about, however, and able to go back to his work.

As he was not satisfied with the slowness of his improvement, he conceived the idea of finishing the summer in one of the suburbs of Paris. And soon he felt persuaded that the fresh air would have the most beneficial influence on his temperament. In

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his case the country air would produce the most marvelous results. He consoled himself with the certainty of his future success, and he would repeat to his father-in-law with an air of vague insinuation: "When we are in the country everything will be all right."

The word "country" alone seemed to him to bear with it a mysterious meaning.

So they rented a villa at Bezons and all three lived there together. The two men walked to the station at Colombes every morning and did the same every evening.

Cora, delighted with this life along the banks of the sweet little river, would idle away her time in picking flowers and gathering enormous bouquets of delicate, trembling ferns.

Every evening they would take a stroll as far as the tollgate of the Morne and enjoy a bottle of beer at the restaurant of The Willows. The river, retarded in its course by the long file of stakes, poured between them and leaped, bubbled and foamed over a space three hundred feet wide; the roaring of the falls made the soil tremble, while a fine mist of vapor floated in the air, arising from the cascade like a light smoke, throwing on the surroundings a delightful odor of spray and a savor of wet earth. As night fell a great light in the distance below and ahead of them indicated Paris, which made Cachelin say every evening: "What a city, after all!" From time to time a train passing on the iron bridge which crossed the end of the island rattled by like a peal of thunder and disappeared quickly, either to the right or to the left, bound for Paris or the sea.

They returned home slowly, watching the moon

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rise, sometimes seating themselves on the bank to see its soft yellow light fall upon the river, whose rippling waters looked very much like flame-colored moiré silk. The frogs uttered their short metallic cries. The calls of the night birds rang out on the air, and sometimes a large, mute shadow glided on the river, troubling its tranquil and luminous course. It was a boat occupied by freebooters who, throwing in their net suddenly, drew it back noiselessly into their boat, dragging in its vast and somber mesh a shoal of shining and quivering gudgeons, like a treasure drawn from the bottom of the sea, a living treasure of silver fish.

Cora, deeply moved, leaned tenderly on the arm of her husband, whose intentions she had guessed, although he said nothing to her about them. It was for the pair like a new betrothal, a second honeymoon. Sometimes he kissed her furtively on the neck behind the ear, just where the downy hair begins to curl.

Cachelin, appeased by the new hope which he felt around him, lived happily, drank much and ate more, feeling quite poetical at twilight—that foolish tenderness which comes to the dullest on seeing certain landscapes, a shower of light in the branches, a setting sun on the distant slopes, with purple reflections on the river. And he would exclaim: "When I see such sights I have to believe in God. It gets me here"—and he indicated the pit of his stomach—"and I feel uneasy. I feel queer. I feel as if I had been plunged in a sort of bath that makes me want to cry."

Lesable was now getting better, and he was suddenly seized with longings which were a surprise to

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him; he experienced a desire to run and frisk about like a colt, to roll in the grass and to shout for joy.

They returned to Paris in the early part of October.

Life was becoming hard for them. They had unkind words for each other at the slightest provocation, and Cachelin, who was beginning to realize the situation, teased them with the sarcastic and coarse epigrams of an old campaigner.

And they were ever pursued by the same thought that tortured them, embittered their mutual hatred, that of the unattainable inheritance. Cora now took a high hand and treated her husband rudely. She acted as if he were a little boy or a man of no consequence. Cachelin would say at the supper-table: "If I had been rich I should have had many children. . . . But when one is poor one must be sensible." And, turning to his daughter, he would add: "You ought to be like myself, but . . ." Then he would cast a meaning glance at his son-in-law and shrug his shoulders in a contemptuous manner.

Lesable made no answer, like a man of great superiority who had been unfortunate enough to marry into a family of boors. At the ministry they all said he was not looking well. The chief clerk even asked him once: "Aren't you sick? You look changed."

He answered: "Not at all, dear master. I may be a little tired. I have worked a great deal these last few weeks, as you may see for yourself."

He expected to receive a certain advancement at the end of the year, and it was with this hope that he had resumed his work with ardor.

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He received only a small present, less than any of the rest. His father-in-law got nothing.

Lesable was indignant and went immediately to his superior, and, for the first time, addressed him as "monsieur." "Why should I work, monsieur, like a slave, if I am not to be properly recompensed?"

M. Torchebeuf was annoyed. "I have told you already, Monsieur Lesable, that I did not wish to discuss such subjects with you. Besides, it is not fair for you to envy any favor which may be conferred upon your colleagues when you consider your financial position."

Lesable could not help blurting out: "But I possess nothing, monsieur. My aunt left her fortune to the first child born to us. My father-in-law and I are living on our salaries."

The astonished chief clerk answered: "If you're not rich at present, you will be some day, so it's all the same."

Lesable withdrew, more downcast over the loss of this advancement than over the unattainable million itself.

A few days later, just as Cachelin had installed himself at his desk, the handsome Maze entered the room, a smile upon his lips; then appeared Pitolet with his eyes sparkling; next Boissel, who opened the door and advanced slowly, tittering and exchanging meaning looks with the others. Old Man Savon continued his copying, his clay pipe in the corner of his mouth, seated on his high chair, his two feet stuck in between the lower bars of his chair, schoolboy fashion.

No one spoke. They seemed to be waiting for something, and Cachelin continued to file orders,

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saying aloud, according to his custom: "Toulon: mess furnishings for the officers of the *Richelieu*. Lorient: diving apparatus for the *Desaix*. Brest: samples of sails of English manufacture for tests."

Lesable put in an appearance. He now came every morning to collect whatever papers were for him, as his father-in-law no longer even took the pains to send them by the porter.

While he was searching among the documents scattered on the order clerk's desk, Maze looked at him from the corner of his eye and rubbed his hands, and Pitolet, who was rolling a cigarette, was all smiles, like one who is overjoyed at something. "Say, Father Savon, you've learned many things in the course of your lifetime, haven't you?"

The old man, who was afraid that they were about to make game of him and refer to his wife again, made no answer.

The good man raised his head: "You know I don't like to jest about this subject. I was unfortunate in marrying an unworthy woman. When I had proof of her infidelity, I divorced her."

Maze, putting on an indifferent air, asked him very seriously: "You obtained proofs on more than one occasion, didn't you?"

And Old Man Savon replied gravely: "Yes, monsieur."

Pitolet joined in: "Still, you are the father of three or four children, aren't you?"

The poor fellow blushed and stammered: "You are trying to wound me, Monsieur Pitolet, but you will not succeed."

Pitolet said: "It's great to have a child, very

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nice and lucky. I wager Lesable would be delighted to have one, just one, like you."

Cachelin had stopped recording. He did not laugh, although Old Man Savon was always a butt for his jokes, which he never failed to hurl at him whenever the subject of his marital woes came up.

Lesable had collected his papers, but knowing well they were attacking him, wished to stay, held back by pride, confused and irritated, above all curious to learn who betrayed his secret. Then he remembered his conversation with the head clerk, and he soon realized that he must show a bold front and much energy, if he did not want to be the laughing-stock of the whole place.

Everybody laughed except Lesable and his father-in-law. And Pitolet, turning toward the order clerk, said: "What's the matter with you, Cachelin? You don't look as if you thought it funny that Old Man Savon had a child."

Lesable began to rummage among his papers again, pretended to read and ignore the conversation, but he was deathly pale.

Boissel repeated in the same hoarse voice: "Concerning the utility of heirs in obtaining inheritances —only two cents!"

Then Maze, who did not approve of this coarse wit and who, deep in his heart, had a grudge against Lesable for having robbed him of his chance of getting the million, asked his more fortunate colleague: "Why, what's the matter, Lesable, you're very pale?"

Lesable looked him square in the face. He hesitated a few moments and tried to find some cutting or witty rejoinder, but failing, merely answered:

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"Nothing. I am just wondering where you got all this refined wit."

A peal of laughter rang out. Old Man Savon, who was beginning to understand that he was not the butt this time, looked on with much astonishment, his mouth wide open. Cachelin awaited the outcome, ready to pounce on the nearest one to him.

The handsome Maze let go one of his coat-tails to curl his mustache and said graciously: "I know that you usually succeed in anything you wish. So I'm wrong in mentioning you. Besides, it's all about Old Man Savon's children, not yours, since you have none."

Lesable inquired impatiently: "What business is it of yours?"

At this Maze also raised his voice: "I say, what's the matter with you? Try to be polite or I'll make you so!"

But Lesable was trembling with anger and losing all self-control, replied: "Monsieur Maze, I am neither a coxcomb nor a dandy like yourself. I forbid you ever to speak to me again. I despise you and all your kind." And he looked defiantly at Boissel and Pitolet.

Maze saw suddenly that his true strength would be in remaining calm and ironical, but his vanity was wounded, and he wished to hurt his enemy deeply, so he went on in a patronizing manner, although his eyes sparkled with rage: "My dear Lesable, you're forgetting yourself. I understand your vexation; it's hard to lose a fortune on account of such a simple thing."

He was still going on in that strain when he received full in the chest Father Savon's ink-pot,

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which Lesable had hurled at him. A flood of ink covered his face and metamorphosed him into a negro with surprising rapidity. He sprang forth, rolling the whites of his eyes, with his hand raised to strike. But Cachelin got in front of his son-in-law, and gripping big Maze round the waist, dragged him aside, shaking him and showering blows on him, and threw him against the wall. Maze freed himself by a violent effort, opened the door and shouted to the two men: "You'll hear from me!" and disappeared.

Pitolet and Boissel followed. Boissel explained his moderation by saying he was afraid to mix in for fear of killing some one.

As soon as he was in his office Maze tried to wash off the stains, but without success; he was covered with a violet ink, said to be indelible. He stood before his mirror, furious and disconsolate, rubbing his face with all his might. He merely obtained a richer color, mingled with red, as he had rubbed his face till it bled.

Boissel and Pitolet were giving him advice. One suggested that he use olive-oil to wash away the ink, the other was sure ammonia was best. The office boy was rushed off to an apothecary, who sent back a yellow liquid and a pumice-stone, all of which produced no better results.

Maze, disheartened, sank into a chair and declared: "The only thing to do now is to settle the question of honor. Will you be my seconds and demand of Monsieur Lesabe a sufficient apology or the reparation of arms?"

They consented readily and began to discuss the necessary steps to be taken. They were totally igno-

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rant about such affairs, but unwilling to betray their ignorance and eager to appear correct, their opinions were weak and contradictory. It was finally agreed that a captain of the navy who was then at the ministry should be consulted. But he knew less. After a few minutes' thinking, he advised them to go and see Lesable and ask to be put in touch with two of his friends.

As they were on their way to the bureau of their colleague, Boissel suddenly stopped. "Ought we not to have our gloves on?" he asked.

Pitolet hesitated an instant. "Perhaps," replied he seriously. "But then we would have to go out to get the gloves, and the chief would stand for no nonsense."

They sent the office boy to bring an assortment from the nearest glove store.

To decide upon the color took time. Boissel preferred black; Pitolet thought that shade out of place under the circumstances. Finally they chose violet.

Seeing the pair enter gloved and solemn, Lesable raised his head and brusquely demanded: "What do you want?"

Pitolet answered: "Sir, we are charged by our friend, Monsieur Maze, to ask of you an apology or a reparation by arms for the assault you made upon him."

But Lesable, still exasperated, cried: "What! he insults me, and then he challenges me into the bargain? Tell him that I despise him, whatever he may do or say."

Boissel advanced tragically and said: "You will oblige us to discuss the matter in the papers, which would be very unpleasant for you."

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Pitolet cunningly added: "And which will hurt your reputation and spoil your chances of promotion."

Lesable was taken aback. What could he do? He thought of gaining time only. "Gentlemen, you will have my answer within ten minutes. Will you wait for it at Monsieur Pitolet's office?"

As soon as he was alone he looked about him, as if to obtain some advice or protection.

A duel! He was about to fight a duel!

He remained startled, frightened, like a peaceful man who had never considered the possibility of such an event, who was not prepared, whose courage was unequal to such a formidable event. He tried to get up, but fell back on his chair, with beating heart. His strength and anger had both suddenly disappeared. But the thought of the opinion of the office, the gossip the whole affair would give rise to, revived his failing pride, and, at a loss as to what to decide, he went to his chief for advice.

Monsieur Torchebeuf was astonished and perplexed. He saw no need of a duel. Besides, all this was going to upset the business of the office. He answered: "I have nothing to say. It is a question of honor which does not concern me. Do you wish me to give you a note to Commandant Bouc? He is very competent in such matters, and he'll be able to guide you."

Lesable accepted the offer and went to the commandant, who even consented to be second. He took an under chief for another.

Boissel and Pitolet were waiting for them with their gloves on. They had borrowed two chairs from the next office in order to have four.

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They saluted gravely and sat down. Pitolet explained the situation. The commandant, after having listened to it all, said: "It's serious, but not irreparable; it all depends upon the intention." He was a sly old sailor, who was enjoying himself.

A lengthy discussion ensued, and four different letters were drawn up, excuses to be tendered by both parties. If Monsieur Maze would acknowledge that he had at the beginning no offensive intent Monsieur Lesable, on his part, would acknowledge he was to blame for throwing the ink-well at his opponent and would ask pardon for his hasty violence.

And the four proxies returned to their clients.

Maze, seated at his table, was agitated by the dread of the possible duel, although expecting to see his adversary retreat, and looked at his cheeks in the little pocket mirror which all office employés carry with them.

He read the letters which were submitted to him and declared, visibly satisfied: "It seems honorable; I am ready to sign."

Lesable had also accepted, without demur, the compromise of his seconds, saying: "If that is your advice, I can but acquiesce."

The four plenipotentiaries met again. Letters were exchanged; they saluted gravely and separated.

An extraordinary agitation prevailed throughout the office. Every one was eager for news.

When it was learned that the matter was settled every one felt disappointed. Some one said: "That does not give Lesable a child." And the saying spread. One of the employés made a song of it.

But, just when everything seemed adjusted, a

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difficulty arose, suggested by Boissel: "What should be the attitude of the adversaries when they met face to face? Should they speak or should they feign to be strangers?" It was decided that they should meet, as if by chance, in the office of Monsieur Torchebeuf and exchange before him a few words of politeness.

This ceremony was quickly gone through, and Maze, having sent for a cab, went home to try and clean his skin.

Lesable and Cachelin returned home together, irritated with one another as if what had happened was due to the other's fault. As soon as he got into the house Lesable flung his hat down roughly and shouted to his wife:

"I've had enough of this now. I have to fight a duel for you now!"

She looked at him, astonished and already angry.  
"A duel! Why?"

"Because Maze insulted me because of you."

She drew nearer to him. "Because of me!  
How?"

He sat down furiously and answered: "He insulted me—that's enough."

But she wanted to know. "I insist upon you telling me what he said about me."

Lesable blushed, then stammered: "He said—he said— It's about our childless marriage."

She gave a start. "Oh, you had better talk! It cost me dear to marry a cipher like you. And what did you answer the wretch?"

This answer scared Lesable, and he answered: "I boxed his ears."

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She gave him a look of surprise. "And what did he do?"

"He sent me his seconds."

She was becoming interested, attracted like all women by the danger of the situation, and she asked in a gentler tone, suddenly feeling a certain degree of regret for the man who was about to risk his life for her: "When do you fight?"

He replied calmly: "We don't fight; it has been settled by the seconds. Maze apologized to me."

She stared at him very contemptuously. "Oh, I have been insulted, and you let it go without fighting! All you needed to cap the whole was to be a coward!"

He rebelled. "I order you to keep still. I know better than you about affairs of honor. Besides, here is Maze's letter. Here it is; read it."

She took the paper, read it, guessed everything and sneered: "So you wrote a letter, too. Oh, how cowardly men are! I, your wife, have been insulted and you are perfectly satisfied with that!"

She had suddenly taken on the very air of Cachelin, with all his trooper's gestures and intonations.

There she stood before him, her hands on her hips, tall, strong, full of vigor, rounded breast, flushed face, her voice vibrating deeply, the blood coloring her fresh young cheeks—looking at this pale little man before her, somewhat bald, clean-shaven, with the short whiskers of a lawyer. She felt like choking, like smothering him.

She repeated: "You're good for nothing. You even allow any one and every one to get ahead of you at the office."

The door opened. Cachelin came in, attracted by

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the noise of their voices, and asked: "What is the matter?"

She turned round. "I'm just telling that clown a few things."

And Lesable, on raising his eyes, noticed their close resemblance. It seemed to him that a veil had been cast away and that they now appeared to him in their true light, such as they really were, common and coarse. It seemed to him that all hope was lost and that he was condemned to live with those two forever.

Cachelin declared: "If only you could divorce him. It is a pity to have married such a fool!"

Lesable sprang to his feet, trembling with rage which burst forth at that word. He walked up to his father-in-law, spluttering: "Get out of here! Do you hear? You're in my house. Clear out!" And he seized a bottle of sedative water, which he brandished like a club.

Cachelin, intimidated, went out of the room backward, murmuring: "What has struck him now?"

But Lesable's anger did not diminish; this was too much for him. He turned round to his wife, who looked at him, rather surprised at his violence, and he cried, after putting back the bottle on the dresser: "As for you—as for you—" But, as he found nothing to say, he stood before her, his face distorted, his voice trembling.

She began to laugh.

This laughter, which was nothing short of an insult to him, crazed him, and he sprang at her, catching her by the neck with his left hand and slapping her furiously with the right. She staggered backward, dazed and almost choking. She struck the

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bed, upon which she fell at full length. He held her tight and continued the beating. Suddenly he rose, breathless and exhausted, and, ashamed of his brutality, he stammered: "See now! see now!"

But she did not stir, as if he had killed her. She remained on her back near the edge of the bed, her face buried in her hands. He approached her awkwardly, anxious as to what would happen next and what was taking place in her mind. After a few minutes his anguish increased and he murmured: "Cora! speak, Cora!" She did not answer, nor did she move. What was the matter with her? What was she doing? Above all, what was she going to do?

His wrath having disappeared as quickly as it had appeared, he felt contemptible, almost like a criminal. He had beaten his wife, he, the well-bred, impassive gentleman! And in the softening of his feelings, during the reaction, he felt like begging her pardon, throwing himself upon his knees and kissing the cheek he had smitten. He touched lightly one of her hands spread over her face. She seemed to feel nothing. He petted her, just as one pets a dog that has been scolded. She noticed this. He repeated: "Cora, listen; I'm sorry, listen." She was like a corpse. Then he tried to pull her hand away. It gave way easily, and he saw an eye staring at him in an alarmed and troubled manner.

He went on: "Listen, Cora; I was too hasty. Your father drove me to it. A man cannot stand such insults."

She made no answer, as if she did not hear. He was at a loss as to what to say or do. He kissed her behind the ear, and, as he rose, he saw a tear in the

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corner of her eye, which trickled down her cheek; her eyelids fluttered nervously and then closed.

He was overcome with deep sorrow, his emotions were aroused; he fell on her and clasped her convulsively; he brushed her other hand away from her lips, and, showering her face with kisses, he besought her: "My poor Cora, forgive me; for Heaven's sake, forgive me!"

She wept noiselessly and without sobbing, as one does from very grief.

He pressed her to him, caressed her, murmuring all the most endearing words he could find, but she remained insensible. She ceased weeping, though. They remained for some time locked in each other's arms.

Night was approaching and filling the room with its shadows, and when it was altogether dark he became bold and solicited his pardon in such a manner as to revive their mutual hopes.

He soon became himself again. She seemed to be more subdued, even moved, spoke more sweetly than before and looked at her husband with eyes that were almost caressing, as though this unexpected chastisement had relaxed her nerves. He said with perfect calmness: "Your father must be lonesome all alone; you ought to go and fetch him. Besides, it is supper-time." She went out.

It was seven o'clock; the servant announced dinner. Then Cachelin appeared, smiling serenely. The dinner was more cordial and the conversation livelier than it had been for a long time, as if some happy event had just taken place.

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### PART V

But their ever renewed hopes were doomed to disappointment. From month to month their expectations were shattered and Lesable was in despair. What cut him most was the coarseness of Cachelin, who called him, in their troubled family intimacy, "Monsieur Rooster," in remembrance probably of the day when he came near receiving a bottle on the head for having called his son-in-law a fool.

The father and daughter, instinctively leagued together, enraged at seeing this fortune escape them, could not torture him enough.

At the table Cora would say: "We haven't much for dinner. If we were rich it would be otherwise. Well, it isn't my fault."

When Lesable left for his office she would say: "Take your umbrella so as not to come home as dirty as an omnibus wheel. It isn't my fault if you have to keep up your work as a quill-driver."

When she went out herself she never failed to grumble: "If I had married another man I'd have a carriage of my own."

She thought of it every minute, hated her husband for it, hurled insults at him continually and attributed her loss of the money to him alone.

Lesable finally became ill and the couple went to the doctor's.

He found a slight disposition to heart trouble and even to consumption.

"You must take care of yourself, monsieur, very great care. It's due to an anæmic condition, to ex-

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haustion, nothing else. Those slight symptoms, if not treated, soon become serious and incurable."

Lesable became white from anguish and asked for a prescription. He was ordered a very complicated régime—iron, rare meat, consommé and a sojourn in the country during the summer. Then the doctor gave them advice for the time when he should be in better health. He gave them an insight into the secrets and tricks usually resorted to successfully in cases like theirs.

The consultation cost forty francs.

When they were in the street Cora said, angrily looking toward the future: "Well, I'm well mated!"

He was silent. He was a prey to all sorts of fears, and weighed each word the doctor had said. Had the latter not deceived him? Had he perceived that there was no hope for him? He did not care a fig for the inheritance and the child! His life was in danger!

He thought he heard a whistling sound in his lungs and his heart beat furiously. As they crossed the Tuileries garden he became weak and wanted to sit down. His wife stood up beside him to humiliate him all the more. He breathed heavily, exaggerating the abnormal manner of breathing due to his emotions; he even counted the beats of his pulse.

Cora stamped with impatience and said: "Are you ever going to stop this farce? Are you ready?" He rose as some persecuted victim might and continued his way without saying a word.

When Cachelin learned the result of the consultation his wrath was beyond control. He bawled: "Well, that's too much! We're beautifully fixed

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now!" And he looked at his son-in-law as if he were going to devour him.

Lesable did not pay attention to them; he was preoccupied with his health only. They might roar, but what he was worried about was his health, his life.

He had his various prescriptions placed near him at table, and he took his medicine faithfully, amid the smiles of his wife and the loud sneering laughter of his father-in-law. He was constantly looking at his reflection in the mirror, timing the beats of his pulse, and even had a bed set up for himself in a dark room, so as to be away from his wife.

He now felt for his wife a sort of timid hatred, mingled with contempt and disgust. All women at present appeared to him in the light of dangerous beasts, monsters, whose mission was to destroy men; and he no longer thought of Aunt Charlotte's will except as one recalls an accident that might have proved fatal.

Some months passed. Only a year was left before the fatal term.

Cachelin had hung up in the dining-room a huge calendar from which he tore a number each day; and, raging at his helplessness, in despair at feeling that this fortune was slipping out of his hands, furious at the thought that he would have to keep up his drudgery and then retire on two thousand francs a year, he gave vent to his feelings, which were not far from exciting him to the wildest and most violent acts.

He could not see Lesable without wishing to crush, smother and trample upon him. His hatred was beyond measure. Every time his son-in-law

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opened the door it seemed to him that a thief was entering the house—a thief who had robbed him of a sacred family inheritance. He hated him worse than a mortal enemy, despising him for his weakness, above all for his cowardice, since he had renounced all upon which their hopes depended, for fear of his health.

Lesable lived as completely apart from his wife as if no tie united them. He never approached or touched her, and avoided her look as much through shame as through fear.

Cachelin asked his daughter every day:

"Well, did your husband make up his mind?"

She answered: "No, father."

Every evening at table the family quarrels became more bitter. Cachelin repeated constantly: "When a man is not a man, it would be better he should die and make way for some one else."

And Cora added: "The fact is that certain people are of no use; they are simply burdens."

Lesable absorbed his prescriptions and made no reply. One day his father-in-law said: "If you do not pick up soon, I know what my daughter will do."

The son-in-law raised his eyes, foreseeing some new outrage. Cachelin went on: "She'll take some one else. And you are might lucky she hasn't done so already. When one has married a titmouse everything is excusable."

Lesable became livid and answered: "Do not let me stand in the way of her following your good advice."

Cora turned her eyes away. And Cachelin remained somewhat confused, for he readily saw that he had gone a little too far.

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### PART VI

At the office the two men seemed to live on fairly agreeable terms. They had tacitly agreed, no doubt, to keep their discord secret. They addressed each other as "my dear Cachelin," "my dear Lesable," and even pretended to joke together, to live happily and contented with their life in common.

Lesable and Maze were very polite and tactful toward one another, like two men who had almost had a fight. The duel they had escaped established between them very exaggerated polite relations, a certain mutual esteem and perhaps, too, a secret desire for a reconciliation, for fear of some renewal of the affair. People observed them and admired them for their very refined and reserved attitude toward one another.

They bowed to each other in a very dignified manner.

But they did not speak. Neither cared to be the first to do so.

But one day Lesable was in a hurry and involuntarily rushed into some one coming from an opposite direction. It was Maze. The former immediately inquired with anxiety: "Did I hurt you?"

The other answered: "Not at all."

Ever since that they deemed it proper to exchange a few words whenever they met. They now vied with each other in courtesy and eagerness to oblige one another. This gave rise to an intimacy which was only tempered by a certain reserve such as exists between people who have been mistaken in one another, and soon a comradeship was established.

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And they would frequently gossip together in the order clerk's office. Lesable had cast aside his haughty airs, and Maze no longer flaunted his social successes. Cachelin joined in their conversation, apparently highly pleased with their renewal of friendship. Sometimes, after the handsome clerk had left the room, he would say to his son-in-law: "That's a fine-looking chap."

One morning, while they were all four in the order clerk's room, Savon, who never left his copying, suddenly rolled off his chair, the rungs of which had doubtless been sawed off by some joker, and the poor fellow fell on the floor uttering cries of affright.

The other three sprang to his assistance. He attributed this mishap to the machinations of the Communists, and Maze insisted upon finding out where he was hurt. Cachelin and he wanted to undress the old man, to dress the wound they said. But he made a desperate resistance, vociferating that he was unhurt.

When the general mirth had settled down Cachelin said: "Say, Maze, why don't you come to dine with us some Sunday, now that we're good friends? We should be pleased. Will you?"

Lesable added his entreaty, but more coldly than his father-in-law: "Do come, we should be so pleased."

Maze hesitated, embarrassed by all the rumors which had been spread about, the remembrance of which made him smile even now.

Cachelin urged him. "Well, then we may expect you?"

"Yes, I accept."

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When her father announced, "Monsieur Maze is to dine with us Sunday," Cora was surprised and could only stammer: "Monsieur Maze? Indeed!"

She blushed very deeply, almost unconsciously. She had heard so much about him, of his manners, his successes, because he was reputed to be quite irresistible with the women, that she had long felt a desire to know him.

Cachelin said, rubbing his hands: "You'll see what a fine-looking, stalwart fellow he is. He's not like your husband."

She remained silent, a little confused, as though she might have dreamed of him.

The dinner was very carefully prepared, as much so as the first one for Lesable formerly. Cachelin discussed the dishes, wishing to have everything flawless, and he seemed gayer, reassured by some secret and sure hope, just as if a certain confidence, still undetermined and vague, had filled his heart all of a sudden.

Cachelin spent that Sunday morning in keeping an eye on the preparations for the dinner, while Lesable was working at some urgent affair, whose papers he had brought home the night before. It was the first week of November and the new year was at hand.

At seven o'clock Maze put in an appearance in the best of spirits. He entered quite familiarly and offered Cora a huge bouquet, which he accompanied with a compliment. He spoke with the easy manner of a man of the world. "It seems to me that I know you a little, and that my acquaintance dates back to your young girlhood, for I have heard much about you for many years."

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Cachelin, perceiving the flowers, said: "That's quite refined." And the daughter remembered that Lesable had not brought a bouquet on the occasion of his first visit. The handsome clerk laughed heartily as if among old friends and bestowed upon Cora the most delicate compliments which brought the color to her cheeks.

He thought her most desirable. She found him very charming. When he was gone, Cachelin asked: "Well, isn't he fine? What a rascal! They say he's a lady-killer."

Cora was less expansive, but she acknowledged that he was agreeable and not so much of a dandy as she had imagined.

Lesable admitted that he had not judged Maze fairly at first.

Maze returned a few times after that, then his visits became more and more frequent. Everybody liked him. Cora prepared his favorite dishes, and the three men became inseparable. The new friend procured box seats for the family at the different theaters through the press.

They walked home along the crowded streets to the Lesable home. Maze and Cora went ahead, keeping step, swinging with the same rhythm, like two creatures born to walk side by side in life. They spoke together in low tones and laughed softly, and the young woman would often glance back at her father and husband.

Cachelin looked at the pair benevolently and often, without considering he was talking to his son-in-law, declared: "They have fine figures and look well together." Lesable answered quietly: "They're of the same height." He was happy now

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that his heart beat less fast, that he was not out of breath every time he ran and that he was stronger in every way; his grudge against his father-in-law, whose coarse jokes had ceased, was also disappearing.

On New Year's Day he was promoted to the chief clerkship. He was so elated over it that he kissed his wife for the first time in six months. She was confused, as if he had done something improper. She looked at Maze, who had come to wish her a happy new year. The latter was also embarrassed, and he looked out the window, like one who did not wish to see.

But Cachelin soon became irritated and ill-humored again and harassed his son-in-law with a renewal of his former jokes. Sometimes he even attacked Maze, as though he held him responsible for the catastrophe which hung over them and the inevitable fate which was rapidly approaching.

March was there and all hope seemed to have vanished, for it would be three years this July since Aunt Charlotte's death.

Spring was early this year. Maze suggested that they all go to the country to pick violets.

They took an early train and stopped at Maisons-Laffitte. A winter breeze was blowing in between the bare twigs, but the green turf was spotted with white and blue flowers, and the fruit trees on the hillside seemed garlanded with roses, their bare branches covered with clusters of bloom.

The Seine ran slow, melancholy and muddy from the last rainfall between its banks, and the whole country around seemed to have arisen from a bath

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and exhaled a savor of mild humidity under the warmth of the first days of spring.

They wandered in the park. Cachelin was glum and more downcast than usual as he thought bitterly of their future disaster. Lesable, morose also, was afraid of getting his feet wet, while Maze and Cora were gathering flowers for a bouquet. Cora for the past few days seemed to be suffering, pale and always tired.

She was soon fatigued and requested to return for luncheon. They came upon a little restaurant near an old ruined mill, and the traditional repast of Parisians on an outing was soon served under a green arbor on the wooden table covered with two napkins, right near the river.

They had just had some fish and some roast beef when Cora hurriedly rose from the table and ran toward the river, holding her napkin over her mouth.

Lesable asked anxiously: "What's the matter with her?" Maze was troubled and answered blushingly: "I am sure I don't know—she was all right a little while ago."

Cachelin stood there, startled, holding his fork in his hand with a bit of salad fluttering on the end of it.

He tried to catch sight of his daughter. Bending a little to the side, he saw his daughter leaning against a tree.

And on the way back she took her husband's arm as if to signify something mysterious which she dared not yet avow.

Maze left them at the railroad station, saying he

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had to do a very important errand which he had forgotten for a moment.

As soon as Cachelin was alone with the couple he inquired: "What was the matter with you?"

Cora did not reply at first. Then, after a moment's hesitation, she said: "Nothing. Just a little heartburn."

She walked languidly with a smile upon her lips. Lesable was uncomfortable; his mind was ill at ease, haunted with confused and contradictory ideas, full of desire for luxury, of stifled wrath, of unspeakable shame, of jealous cowardice—he kept quiet like a person half asleep who does not wish to see the sun pouring into the room and casting a ray on the bed.

Cora, who saw he was won over, smiled in a contented and tender manner, and Cachelin, who saw the way clear to the million now, said: "We must celebrate and dine at the restaurant."

They were slightly tipsy when they reached home, and Lesable was unable to go to his dark bed chamber. He stumbled, perhaps by mistake, perhaps by a certain forgetfulness, into his wife's bedroom. And the bed seemed to roll and pitch all night. He was even seasick.

He was very much surprised on awakening to find Cora in his arms.

She opened her eyes, smiled and kissed him with a sudden impulse, full of affection and gratitude. Then she said tenderly: "If you want to be very nice, you won't go to the ministry to-day. You needn't be very exact now that we're rich. And we'll go to the country, both of us, all alone."

He felt comfortable and happy. A hitherto unknown need of laziness paralyzed him body and

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soul. One thought only haunted him agreeably: he was going to be rich, independent.

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### PART VII

From the date of this happy discovery the three relatives lived in perfect harmony. They were joyous, kind and tolerant. Cachelin had resumed his old joviality and Cora overwhelmed her husband with kindness. Lesable himself seemed to be another man, always in good spirits, as he had never been before.

Maze came less often and no longer felt at home among them; he was still received politely, but with more reserve, for happiness is selfish and excludes strangers.

Cachelin himself seemed to be secretly hostile to the handsome clerk whom he had a few months previous introduced with such enthusiasm. It was he who announced the great news to Maze.

Maze feigned surprise and replied: "Well, you're satisfied then?"

Cachelin answered: "Of course," and he noticed his colleague did not appear over-elated.

Maze, however, dined there every Sunday evening. But the conversation lagged, although there had not been a sign of open antipathy between them, and this embarrassment increased as the weeks glided by. One evening, just after his departure, Cachelin exclaimed moodily: "That fellow is beginning to grate on my nerves!"

And Lesable joined in: "The fact is that there

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is not much to him, when you know him well." Cora lowered her eyes. She was now uncomfortable in his presence; he seemed to be ashamed before her, no longer smiled at her and offered theater tickets. In fact, it looked as if they could not bear this intimacy which formerly had been so cordial, and it became an unutterable bore to all concerned.

But one Thursday Cora kissed her husband's whiskers more affectionately than usual as she whispered: "You're going to scold me perhaps."

"Why?"

"Well—M. Maze came to see me a little while ago, and as I do not wish to be gossiped about, I asked him never to come unless you were there. He was vexed."

Lesable asked in surprise:

"What did he say?"

"Not much, but it didn't suit me, so I told him to put an end to his visits entirely. You know that I did not introduce him here; it was you and father. So I was afraid you might not be pleased."

A grateful joy filled his heart.

"You did right, and I thank you for it."

She added, to regulate the situation between the two men as she had planned in advance: "At the office you'll act just the same as formerly, only he will not come here any more."

Lesable took his wife into his arms tenderly and kissed her upon the cheeks and eyelids. He reiterated: "You're an angel!"

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## PART VIII

Cora gave birth to a little girl toward the last days of September. She was called Désirée, but as they were bent upon having an elaborate and solemn baptism, they decided to wait until they had purchased the country home they had dreamed so much about formerly.

They chose it at Asnières, on the hills that overlook the Seine.

Great events took place that winter. As soon as they had inherited the money Cachelin applied for and obtained his retirement. He spent his time carving wood, mostly covers of cigar boxes, with the aid of a scroll-saw. He insisted upon showing his work to every one and expected it to be highly admired.

In his admiration for his own work, he would exclaim: "What astonishing things can be done!"

The assistant chief, M. Rabout, was dead, so Lesable took charge of his duties without being raised to his position as yet, because the requisite time had not elapsed since his last promotion.

Cora had become another woman, more reserved and more elegant, having instinctively divined all the transformations which wealth imposes.

On New Year's Day she made a visit to the chief's wife and was so charming and gracious in asking her to be the godmother of her child that Madame Torchebeuf accepted. Cachelin was to be godfather.

The ceremony took place on a splendid Sunday in June. All the employés of the bureau were invited.

At nine o'clock Lesable was at the station wait-

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ing for his principal guest, while a groom in livery, with great gilt buttons, was holding the bridle of a plump pony in front of a brand new phaeton.

Monsieur Torchebeuf alighted from a first-class carriage, with his wife dressed up in a stunning fashion, while Pitolet and Boissel came out of a second-class carriage. They did not dare invite Father Savon, but it had been arranged that they would meet him in the afternoon as if by chance and invite him, with the consent of the chief.

Lesable ran to meet his chief, who was approaching, looking very small in a frock-coat upon the lapel of which shone a decoration like a large red rose in full bloom. His enormous head, surmounted by a large-brimmed hat, made him look like a phenomenon, and his wife, by raising herself ever so little on the tip of her toes, could look over his head.

Léopold was radiant, constantly thanking and bowing to his guests. Then he rushed to his colleagues, begging to be excused for not taking them over in his carriage, as it was too small, and he directed: "Follow the quay and you'll strike the Villa Désirée, the fourth after the turn of the road. That's my villa."

And, jumping into the carriage, he seized the reins and drove off, while the groom leaped lightly on the back seat.

The ceremony went on very smoothly. Then they had luncheon. Each guest found a present under his napkin in proportion to his importance. The godmother received a bracelet of solid gold, her husband a stick-pin with a ruby in it, Boissel a portfolio of Russian leather and Pitolet a meer-

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schaum pipe. It was Désirée's present to her new friends, they said.

Madame Torchebeuf blushed with pleasure and confusion and put on the brilliant circlet, while the chief, who wore a bow tie, stuck the pin under his decoration, like another one of inferior order.

Through the window a large strip of river could be seen winding like a ribbon toward Suresnes. The repast at first was solemn, owing to the presence of Monsieur and Madame Torchebeuf. Then a little gaiety crept in. Cachelin risked a few of his coarse jokes. Now that he was rich, every one thought them proper and laughed.

Pitolet and Boissel could not have uttered them, for coming from them they would have been deemed shocking.

At dessert the child was brought in to be kissed by every one. Buried in a mass of lace, it looked at the people with its large blue eyes, vague and questioning, and turned its head as though it were beginning to take notice.

It was now about two. Cachelin proposed to do the honors of the place and then take them for a walk on the banks of the Seine.

They went through the house, from garret to cellar. Then they admired the garden, going from tree to tree, plant to plant, and they disbanded for the promenade.

Cachelin, somewhat embarrassed and intimidated by the presence of the ladies, drew Boissel and Pitolet into a café on the bank of the river, while Mesdames Torchebeuf and Lesable, with their husbands, walked on the other bank, away from the noisy Sunday crowd. They walked slowly, with their hus-

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bands following them, talking about the affairs of the ministry.

On the river boats glided by, impelled by the vigorous strokes of young men's strong arms. The women steered, protected from the sun by silk parasols of different colors. Shouts, calls and oaths were exchanged from one boat to another; a distant clamor of human voices, confused and drawling, indicated that somewhere around a joyous crowd was swarming.

Fishing lines were strewed along the banks, while almost naked swimmers were diving from heavy boats into the river.

Madame Torchebeuf looked upon the scene with evident surprise. Cora said: "That is the way it is every Sunday. It spoils the charm for me."

Cora turned her head away contemptuously, saying to her guest: "Let us go elsewhere; these creatures are too degrading!"

And they went away. Monsieur Torchebeuf was saying: "It's sure. On the first day of the year. The director promised me to do it."

Lesable was saying: "Oh, I don't know how to thank you, dear master."

When they arrived at the house they found Cache-lin, Boissel and Pitolet laughing till they cried almost, and carrying Old Man Savon, whom they had met with a woman, they said.

The old fellow was protesting: "That's not true. No, it is not. It's not right to do that, Monsieur Cachelin, no, it is not!"

And Cachelin laughed very loud: "Oh, you rascal! You called her your little duckling. We've got you, you bad old boy."

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The ladies themselves smiled at his discomfiture. Cachelin exclaimed: "With Monsieur Torchebeuf's permission we'll keep him a prisoner for dinner."

The chief kindly consented. And the joke was kept up about the abandoned lady, much to Savon's annoyance. He was quite upset about this joke.

This furnished conversation for the whole evening.

Cora and Madame Torchebeuf watched the sunset. The sun cast a purple haze among the leaves. Not the slightest breeze moved the branches; a serene calmness pervaded all and everything.

A few boats passed by now and then.

Cora asked: "It is said that poor Savon married a wretch of a woman?"

Madame Torchebeuf, well informed on all subjects, volunteered: "Yes, an orphan, far too young for him, who left him for a younger, worthless fellow." The stout lady added: "I say he is no good, and yet I have no proof of it. They say it was a love match; at all events, Savon himself is not fascinating."

Madame Lesable replied: "That is not an excuse. Our neighbor, Monsieur Barbon, is in the same boat. His wife fell in love with a painter and ran away with him. I don't know how a woman can lower herself to that extent. Women of that kind should suffer a special punishment for bringing such shame on a family."

At the other side of the alley Désirée appeared, carried by her nurse. The child was approaching the two women, all pink in the reddish-gold tint of the evening. It stared at the fiery sky with the same

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calm, serene look that it cast upon the people around it.

All the men approached her, and Cachelin took his granddaughter in his arms and lifted her as if he were going to send her into the sky. Her outline could be seen against the brilliant background, with her long robe hanging almost to the ground.

The grandfather exclaimed: "That's the only true happiness, old Savon, isn't it?"

The old man did not answer, having nothing to say or else too much to think about.

A servant opened the door and announced:  
"Madame is served."

## IN BRITTANY

*July, 1882.*

**T**HIS is the season for traveling, the clear season, when one loves new horizons, the vast stretches of blue sea which rest the eye and calm the soul, the fresh, wooded dells, where, for no reason, the heart grows tender. One sits, at sunset, on a bank of velvety grass and watches at one's feet a little pool of quiet water in the rut made by the wheels of passing wagons and where the sinking sun is reflected.

I delight in these walks through a land which one seems to be discovering, the sudden surprise on seeing customs of which one knew nothing, this constant tension of interest, this joy of seeing, this endless awakening of thought.

One thing alone spoils for me these charming explorations: guidebooks. Written by traveling salesmen, they give false descriptions, incorrect information; they indicate imaginary roads, and they are, with the single exception of an excellent German guide, the comfort of shopkeepers on a pleasure trip to the land of Joan, and the despair of true trampers who go through the land knapsack on back and cane in hand by paths, through ravines and along the beaches.

They lie, they know nothing, they understand nothing with their stupid and emphatic prose. They

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make the most delightful countries seem ugly; they only know the highways and are worth no more than the so-called military maps, where the dams of the Seine, which were made thirty years ago, have not yet been recorded.

And yet how pleasant it is, when traveling, to know a little in advance the region into which one is venturing! How happy one is when one finds a book in which some sincere wanderer has outlined a few of his impressions! Sometimes it merely gives one a vague idea of the places to be seen; sometimes it gives more. When penetrating into Algeria as far as the oasis of Laghouat one should read every day and hour that admirable book by Fromentin, "A Summer in the Sahara." This book opens the eyes and mind, it seems to light up these burning plains, mountains and solitudes, it reveals to one the very soul of the desert.

There are everywhere in France delightful spots which are almost unknown. Without intending to write a new guidebook, I would like, nevertheless, to point out a few short excursions, trips of a week or ten days, familiar to all pedestrians, but unknown to all who lead a sedentary life.

Never follow the highways, and always go along the bypaths, sleep in lofts when one does not come to an inn, eat bread and drink water when no other provisions are at hand, fear neither rain nor distances nor the long hours of regular marches. This is the only way to penetrate into the heart of a country, to discover, right near the towns where all the tourists pass, thousands of things of which one had not the slightest idea.

Brittany is the most curious of all the old

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provinces of France; one can, in ten days, understand enough of it to grasp its temperament, for every country, like every man, has its peculiarities.

Let us cross it in a few lines. We will follow along the coast from Vannes to Douarnenez, the true Breton coast, solitary and low, strewn with reefs, where the waters always rumble and seem to answer the wind whistling over the moors.

The Morbihan, a kind of inland sea, which rises and descends under the pressure of the tides of the great ocean, stretches before the harbor of Vannes. One must cross it in order to reach the open.

It is full of mysterious, haunted Druidic islands. They are covered with tumuli, dolmens, menhirs, all these strange stones which, in the olden times, were almost looked upon as gods. These little islands, according to the Bretons, are as numerous as the days of the year. The Morbihan is a symbolical sea shaken by superstitions.

Herein lies the great charm of this country; it is a nursery for legends. Dead everywhere else, the old beliefs remain rooted in this granite soil. Old stories are also indestructible in this land; and the peasant will tell you of adventures accomplished fifteen centuries ago, as though they dated from yesterday, as though his father or grandfather had seen them.

There are crypts where the dead stay intact, as on the day death struck them, dried simply because the source of the blood had dried up. Thus memories live eternally in this corner of France, and even the manner of thinking of remote ancestors still lives on.

I had left Vannes on the very day of my arrival,

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in order to visit an historical castle, Sucinio, and from there I expected to go to Locmariaker, Carnac, and then, following along the coast, to Pont-l'Abbé, Penmarch, Pointe du Raz, Douarnenez.

At first the road bordered along the Morbihan, and then cut across an endless heath crossed by a network of ditches full of water and without a house, a tree, a single creature, covered with under-brush, which whistled in the furious wind under the sky full of ragged clouds.

A little farther on I crossed a hamlet, where were wandering around three barefooted, sordid-looking peasants and a tall girl of about twenty, whose legs were covered with dung. Then I came out again on the barren, deserted, swampy heath, which stretched out to the sea, whose gray line, at times lightened by a streak of foam, extended to the horizon.

In the middle of this wild stretch rose a high ruin, a square castle, surrounded by towers, standing there all alone between these two deserts—the heath and the sea.

This old manor of Cucinil, which dates back to the thirteenth century, is far-famed. It is there that was born the great Connétable de Richemont, who reconquered France from the English.

There are no more doors. I entered the vast, solitary courtyard, where the crumbling turrets had made heaps of stones; I climbed up the remnants of stairways, scrambled up broken walls, clinging to vines, loose rocks, anything on which I could lay my hands, and I finally managed to reach the top of one of the towers whence I could look out over Brittany.

Opposite me, behind an uncultivated field, the

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dirty-looking ocean was thundering under a black sky; everywhere was the heath. Over there, to the right, lay the Morbihan with its ragged coasts, and farther away, barely visible, a white spot, lighted by the sun, indicated the position of Vannes. Still farther away could be seen a large cape, Quiberon.

All this was sad, melancholy, dreary. The wind was whistling over these mournful stretches; I was indeed in the old haunted country; and in the walls, bushes, ditches, I imagined that I could detect the very smell of legends.

The following day I crossed Saint-Gildas, where the ghost of Abelard roams. At Port-Navalo the sailor who ferried me across the straits spoke to me of his father, who was a Chouan, as well as his elder brother and his uncle, the curé; all three of them were killed. And with outstretched hand he pointed to Quimberon.

At Locmariaker I entered the country of the Druids. A Breton showed me Cæsar's table, a monster granite slab upheld by giants; then he spoke to me of Cæsar as of a person whom he might have known.

Finally, still following the coast between the heath and the ocean, from the top of the hill I saw before me, toward evening, the granite fields of Carnac.

They seem alive, these stones standing in endless rows, giants or pygmies, square, long, flat; they look like long, thin bodies or short, stout ones. When one looks at them steadily they seem to move, to bend, to become infused with life.

One easily gets lost among them. At times a wall interrupts this mass of granite; one climbs over it,

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and the strange procession begins over again, planted like avenues, spaced like soldiers, as terrifying as apparitions. Your heart beats, and unconsciously your mind goes back to the ages and is lost in superstitious beliefs.

As I was standing motionless, bewildered and delighted, a sudden noise behind me gave me such a shock that I turned around with a start. A little old man, dressed in black, with a book under his arm, greeted me and said: "So you are visiting our Carnac, monsieur." I told him of my enthusiasm and of the scare which he had given me. He continued: "Here, monsieur, there are so many legends in the air that every one is afraid without knowing why. For five years I have been searching among these rocks; almost all of them have a secret, and at times I imagine that they have a soul. When I return to the boulevard I smile at my foolishness; but when I come back to Carnac I am a believer, an unconscious believer, without any definite religion, but possessing them all." He stamped on the ground, crying: "This is a land of religion; one must never jest with bygone beliefs. We are, monsieur, among the Druids; let us respect their faith."

The sun sank behind the sea, leaving the sky crimson, and this light was shed on the great rocks, our neighbors. The old man smiled and said:

"These terrible creeds have such power in this place that I even had a vision here. What am I saying, a vision? A veritable apparition! Over there, on that dolmen, at this same hour one evening, I distinctly saw Korivwen, the sorceress who boiled the miraculous water."

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I interrupted him and asked him who this witch Korivwen might be. He was indignant.

"What! You do not know the mother of the god Hu and the mother of the korrigans!"

"No, I must admit that I do not. If it is a legend, tell it to me."

I sat down beside him on a menhir, while he related the following tale:

"The god Hu, father of the Druids, had for wife the sorceress Korivwen. She presented him with three children, Mor-Vrau, Creiz-Viou, a daughter, the most beautiful girl in the world, and Aravik-Du, the most frightful-looking of all creatures.

"Korivwen, in her maternal love, wished at least to leave something to this unfortunate son, and she decided to let him drink the water of divination.

"This water had to boil a year. The enchantress confided the keeping of the vessel which contained it to a blind man named Morda and to the dwarf Gwiou.

"The year was almost over, and the two watchers relaxed a little in their zeal, a small amount of the sacred liquid spilled, and three drops fell on the dwarf's finger; he carried it to his mouth, and immediately knew the future. The vessel then cracked of its own accord, and Korivwen appeared and rushed for Gwiou, who ran away.

"When he saw that he was in danger of being caught he changed himself into a hare, that he might run faster, but immediately the sorceress became a greyhound and sprang after him. She was going to seize him at the edge of a stream, but he suddenly took the form of a fish and jumped into the water. Then an enormous otter appeared, who

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pursued him so closely that he could only escape by becoming a bird. No sooner had he done this than an immense hawk, with outstretched wings and open beak, descended from the heavens; it was still Korivwen; and Gwiou, trembling with fear, changed himself into a grain of wheat and hid himself among many others.

"Then a big black hen ran up and swallowed him. Korivwen, revenged, was resting, when she noticed that she was once more to become a mother.

"The grain of wheat had sprouted in her. A child was born, and Hu abandoned it on the water in a wicker cradle. But the child was saved by the son of King Gouydno and became a genius, the spirit of the heath, the goblin. Thus it is that from Korivwen descend all these little fantastic beings, dwarfs and gnomes, who haunt these rocks. It is said that they live beneath them, in little holes, and that they come out in the evening to run around through the furze. Stand here for a long time, monsieur, in the midst of these enchanted monuments; look steadily at some dolmen lying on the ground, and you will soon hear the earth rumble; you will see the stone move, and you will tremble with fear as you see the head of a korrigan, which is looking at you and lifting the block of granite with his head. Now, let us go to dinner."

Night had come, moonless and black, full of the whisperings of the wind. I was walking with hands stretched out, bumping against these great upright stones; and the story, the country, my thoughts, all had taken such a supernatural tone, that I would not have been in the least surprised suddenly to feel a korrigan slip between my legs.

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The following day I started out again, crossing heaths, villages, towns, Lorient, Quimperlé, so pretty in its valley, Quimper.

The road leaves Quimper, goes up a hill, crosses valleys, passes a sort of grassy and mournful-looking lake, and finally penetrates into Pont-l'Abbé, the most Breton little town of all that Breton Brittany which extends from the Morbihan to the Pointe du Raz.

At the entrance, an old castle surrounded by towers dips its walls in a gloomy pond, where the wild birds fly. A little river flows out of here, up which the coasters can come as far as the town. In the narrow streets with the severe-looking houses the men wear the immense broad-brimmed hat, the magnificent embroidered vest, and the four superposed jackets; the first, as large as the hand, barely covering the shoulder blades, and the last stopping halfway between the waist and the knees.

The tall, pretty, fresh girls have their bosoms compressed in a cloth vest, which does not even allow one to perceive their throats. Their hair is dressed in a peculiar manner. Two bands, embroidered in different colors, frame the face and hold back the hair, which falls in braids, and is then caught up over the head under a peculiar cap, often woven in gold and silver.

The road again leaves this little medieval town. It leads toward the furze-dotted heath. From time to time I saw three or four cows grazing by the road, always accompanied by a sheep. For several days I wondered why I never saw cows without a sheep. This question troubled and worried me, became a regular obsession. Finally I looked for

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a man I could ask. I searched for a long time, roaming around through villages and never meeting a person who could speak French. Finally a priest who was walking along, reading his breviary, informed me politely that this sheep is the wolf's share.

A sheep is worth less than a cow, and as there is no danger in capturing it, the wolf always prefers it. But it often happens that the brave cows form a hollow square, in order to defend their innocent companion, and they receive on the end of their sharp horns the beast in quest of live flesh.

Here is to be found the legendary wolf, which terrifies our childhood, the great white wolf, which all the hunters have seen and which no one has ever killed. He is never seen in the morning. It is toward five o'clock on a winter's evening, just as the sun is setting, that he appears running along on some barren height, outlining his long silhouette against the sky.

Why has no one killed him? Ah, well! This is just a supposition; during the hunt, luncheon begins at about one o'clock and ends at about four. A lot of wine has been consumed, and much has been said about the white wolf. On leaving the table he is seen. What is there surprising about his not being killed?

I was going straight before me on the road paved with gray granite, which shone in the sunlight. The fields on both sides are dotted with furze. Here and there an enormous stone constantly reminds of the Druids. The wind blows close to the ground, whistling through the thorny bushes. At times a dull roar, like the boom of a distant cannon, makes

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the earth tremble; for I am approaching Penmarch, where it seems that the sea plunges into sonorous caverns. The waves engulfed in these holes shake the entire coast, and can be heard as far as Quimper on a stormy day.

For a long time, already, I have been able to see the long line of gray breakers, which seem to dominate this whole low, barren country. Everywhere pointed rocks burst through the waves and show their black heads surrounded by foam, as though they were drooling; right up close to the water a few frail houses are seeking to hide behind a heap of stones in order to avoid the eternal storm and salt rain of the ocean. A large lighthouse, which trembles on its rocky foundation, juts out into the open, and the keepers relate that sometimes during the stormy nights the long granite column pitches like a ship, and that the clock falls downward to the ground and that the objects on the wall are loosened, fall and break.

From here to the Conquet is the country of shipwrecks. It is there that is ambushed the hideous death of the sea—drowning. No other coast is more dangerous, more feared, such a destroyer of men.

At the backs of the little houses of the fishermen one sees, groveling in the mud with the pigs, an old woman, big girls with bare and dirty legs, and the sons, the oldest of whom is about thirty. The father is almost never to be found there, and very seldom the oldest son. Do not ask where they are, for the old woman would stretch out her arm toward the horizon, where the waves roll and pass as though ready, at any minute, to rush over this land.

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But it is not only the treacherous sea that destroys these men. There is an all-powerful and still more perfidious ally which helps it every night in its greed for human flesh—alcohol. The sailors know and admit it. They say: "When the bottle is full you see the reef, but when it is empty you see it no more."

The coast of Penmarch terrifies one. It is here that the wreckers must have attracted ships in danger by tying a lantern to the horns of a cow, which had been hobbled in order to simulate the motions of another vessel.

Here, a little to the right, is a rock which has become famous by a terrible tragedy. The wife of one of the last prefects of the Morbihan was sitting on this stone, holding her little girl in her lap. A few yards below her, the sea seemed calm, inoffensive, asleep. Suddenly one of those strange waves which are known as "tidal waves" came up noiselessly, swollen, irresistible. It climbed the rock like a sneak and carried out two women. Passing coast guards, in the distance, saw only a pink parasol quietly floating on the calm waters, and the great, bare, glistening rock.

For a whole year lawyers and physicians discussed, argued, pleaded in order to find out which one of the two women, who had been carried away in the same wave, had died the first, mother or daughter. Cats were drowned with their kittens, dogs with their pups, rabbits with their little ones, in order that there might be no doubt, for a large inheritance was at stake, as the fortune was to go to one or the other of two families, according as

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the last convulsion was stronger in the large or in the small body.

Almost opposite this sinister spot rises a granite Calvary, such as one often meets in this pious land, where the crosses, so old themselves, are as numerous as their elders, the dolmens. But this Calvary rises over a strange bas-relief, representing in a crude and even vulgar manner the birth of Christ. A passing Englishman admired the naïve sculpture and had it covered over with a roof in order to preserve it from the attacks of this wild climate.

Let us follow along the shore the endless beach along the bay of Audierne. We must either ford or swim across two little rivers, plod along through the sand and seaweed, and keep on between these two solitudes, one moving and the other motionless, the sea and the heath.

Here is Audierne, a gloomy little harbor, which is only enlivened by a few fishing smacks, anchored at the entrance, engaged in sardine fishing.

Before leaving, in the morning, instead of the common coffee, I had a few of these fresh fish, covered with salt, tasty and savory, real violets of the seas. Then I started out toward the Pointe du Raz, this end of the world, this last bit of Europe.

I went up, up, always up, and suddenly I saw two seas, to the left the ocean, to the right the English Channel.

It is here that the current and furious waves meet in battle, wrecking vessels and engulfing men.

O waves, how many sad stories you know,  
Deep, dark, and feared by those waiting at home.

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No more trees, nothing but tufts of grass on the great, outjutting cape. At the end of it are two lighthouses, and all around are many others, rising up above the reefs. There is one which they have been trying in vain to finish for the last ten years. The furious sea keeps destroying the work of the tireless workers.

Far away in the distance, the sacred island of Sein looks along the horizon, over the harbor of Brest, at its dangerous sister, the island of Ouessant.

“Who sees Ouessant  
Sees his blood,”

say the sailors. The island of Ouessant is the most inaccessible of all, and one which the sailors only approach with dread.

The high promontory ends abruptly, falling straight down into the raging seas. But a little path surrounds it, creeping along the inclined granite, spreading out on the crests not wider than the hand.

Suddenly one finds himself standing on the brink of a fearful abyss with walls as black as ink, which bring back to one the noise of the furious struggle of the waters, which is happening below, deep down at the bottom of this hole, which has been called Hell.

Although standing a hundred yards above the sea, I could feel the spray, and, leaning over the precipice, I contemplated these raging waters, which seemed to be moved by an uncontrollable rage.

It was indeed a hell which no poet had described. I was seized with dread at the thought of men being

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thrown down in there, rolling, turning and plunging about in this storm between four walls, thrown up against the sides, caught again by the waves, engulfed, reappearing, and finally swallowed up by the bubbling, giant waves.

I started out again, haunted by these images, and pushing my way against a heavy wind which was lashing a solitary cape. At the end of about twenty minutes I reached a little village. An old priest, who was reading his breviary behind a stone wall, greeted me. I asked him where I might spend the night, and he offered me the hospitality of his home.

An hour later we were sitting before his door, talking of this dreary country, which grips the soul, when a little Breton, a child, passed before us, bare-footed, his long blond hair flying in the wind. The curé called him in his maternal language, and the little urchin, suddenly very shy, came toward us, with his eyes lowered and his hands hanging by his sides.

"He will recite his canticle to you," said the priest; "the little fellow has a wonderful memory, and I expect to make something out of him."

The child began to mumble unknown words in the sing-song tone used by little girls who are saying their piece. He rattled on without any punctuation, running all the syllables together as though the whole were only one word, stopping from time to time for a breath, and then taking up again his hurried recital. Then he was silent. It was all over. The curé patted him on the cheek and said:

"Very well! Now, run along."

The child went his way; then my host added:

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"He has just recited to you an old canticle of this land."

I asked :

"An old canticle? Is it known?"

"Not at all. I'll translate it for you if you wish."

Then the old man, in a powerful voice, growing excited as though he were preaching, raising his arm in a threatening manner, recited this canticle, which I took down at his dictation:

### BRETON CANTICLE

"Hell! Hell! O, sinners, do you know what it is?

\* \* \*

"It is a furnace with a raging fire, beside which the fire of a forge, which reddens the bricks of an oven, is nothing but smoke!"

\* \* \*

"Light is never seen there! Fire burns like fever, invisible! Hope never enters there, for the wrath of God has sealed the door!"

\* \* \*

"Fire on your heads, fire all about you! Are you hungry? Eat fire! Are you thirsty? Drink from this river of molten brimstone!"

\* \* \*

"You will cry through Eternity; your tears will make a sea, and this sea will not be a drop of water for Hell! Your tears shall nourish the flames instead of putting them out; and you will feel the marrow burning in your bones."

\* \* \*

"And then your heads will be cut off above your

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shoulders, and yet you will live! The demons will toss your pieces to each other, and yet you will live! They will roast your flesh on braziers; you will feel your flesh turn to coals; and yet you will live!

\* \* \*

“And there, there will still be other torches. You will hear reproaches, maledictions and curses.

\* \* \*

“The father will say to his son: ‘Curses be upon you, son of my flesh, for it is for your sake that I wished to amass money by theft!’

\* \* \*

“And the son will answer: ‘Curses! Curses be upon you, my father; for it is you who gave me my pride, which led me here!’

\* \* \*

“And the daughter will say to her mother: ‘A thousand curses on you, my mother, a thousand curses on you, den of impurities, for you left me free, and I turned away from God!’

\* \* \*

“And the mother will no longer recognize her children; and she will answer: ‘Curses on my daughters and on my sons, curses on the sons of my daughters and on the daughters of my sons!’

\* \* \*

“And these cries will resound throughout Eternity. And these tortures will always be. And this fire—this fire! It is the wrath of God who lighted this fire! It will burn forever without diminishing, without smoke, never penetrating less deeply than the marrow of your bones.

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"Eternity! Woe! Never to cease dying, never to cease drowning in an ocean of suffering.

\* \* \*

"O 'Never'! you are a word faster than the ocean!  
O 'Never'! you are full of cries, of tears and of anger!  
'Never'! Oh, you are harsh. Oh! you terrify me!"

When the old priest had finished he asked me:  
"Is that not terrible?"

Over there, in the distance, we could hear the tireless waves beating against the gloomy cliff. I once more saw this hole full of angry foam, dismal and roaring, the true home of Death; and something of the mystic fear which makes repenting sinners tremble was weighing on my soul.

I started out again at sunrise, expecting to reach Douarnenez before nightfall.

A man, who spoke French and who had traveled for fourteen years in the service of government ships, came up to me as I was looking for the coast-guard path, and we went down together toward the Baie des Trépassés, of which the Pointe du Raz is a part.

It is an immense semicircle of sand, of an unforgettable melancholy, of a disquieting sadness, giving one, after a short time, the desire to pass by. A barren valley with a mournful pond, without any reeds, a pond which seems dead, reaches down to this frightful beach. It seems, indeed, to be an antechamber to the infernal regions. The yellow sand, dreary and flat, stretches out as far as the enormous granite rock which faces the Pointe du Raz, and where break the furious waves.

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In the distance we saw three men standing motionless in the sand, like stakes. My companion seemed surprised, for no one ever came to this deserted spot. But on coming near, we noticed something long, stretched out near them, as though buried in the sand; at times they would lean down and touch it and then stand up again.

It was the corpse of a drowned sailor from Douarnenez, lost the preceding week, with his four comrades. For a week they had been waiting in this place, where the current throws up the bodies. He was the first to come to this last meeting place.

But something was occupying my guide's mind, for drowned people are not rare in this country. He took me toward the gloomy pond, and, making me lean over the water, he showed me the walls of the town of Ys. All that was visible was a bit of ancient masonry. Then I took a drink from a tiny stream of water at the best spring in the country, as he claimed. Finally he told me the story of the vanished city, as though the event were still recent and had happened, at the earliest, at the time of his grandfather.

A good but weak-minded king had a daughter, who was very perverse and beautiful, so beautiful that all the men went mad at the sight of her, so perverse that she gave herself to all, then had them killed by throwing them into the sea from the top of the neighboring rocks.

It is said that her unruly passions were more violent than the furious waves of the ocean and more unappeasable. Her body seemed to be a furnace where the souls burned which Satan then plucked.

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God wearied of this lust and informed an old saint, who was living in the neighborhood, of his plans. The saint warned the king, who did not dare to punish and imprison his darling daughter, but who informed her of God's warning. She paid no heed to it and gave herself up to such debauchery that the whole town imitated her, and became a city of love, from which all modesty and virtue disappeared.

One night God awoke the saint and announced to him that the hour of vengeance had come. The saint ran to the king, who alone had remained virtuous in this country. The king had his horse saddled and offered one to the saint, who accepted it. A great noise frightened them, and they saw the sea coming toward them, bounding and roaring across the country. Then the king's daughter appeared in her window, crying: "Father, are you going to let me die thus?" And the king took her across his horse and fled through one of the gates of the town just as the water was entering through the other.

They galloped through the night, but the waves followed them with a terrible rumbling and grumbling. Already their foam was lapping the horses' hoofs, and the old saint said to the king: "Sire, cast your daughter from your horse, or else you are lost." And his daughter cried: "Father, father, do not desert me!" But the saint stood up in his stirrups, and, in a voice like thunder, he announced: "It is the will of God!" Then the king thrust away from him his daughter, who was clinging to him. She fell in back of him; the waves immediately swallowed her and then receded.

And the dismal pond which covers these ruins is

## IN BRITTANY

the water, which has remained there since the destruction of the impure city.

This legend is a story of Sodom, arranged for the use of ladies.

This event, which is related as though it had happened yesterday, occurred, it seems, in the fourth century after the coming of Christ.

I reached Douarnenez in the evening. This is a little fishing town, which would be the most famous bathing resort in France if it were less isolated.

The harbor is what makes its gracefulness and charm. It lies in the hollow and seems to watch the gentle, long coast, undulating, rounding, always curving delightfully, and whose distant crests are bathed in this light, transparent, blue and white haze, which floats over the sea.

The following day I left for Quimper, and I spent the night at Brest, in order, at daybreak, to take the train to Paris.

# IN THE SUNLIGHT

OR AFRICAN WANDERINGS

LIFE, so brief, and yet so long, sometimes becomes unbearable. It rolls along, always the same, with death at the end. We can neither stop, change nor understand it. Often a feeling of indignant revolt comes over us when we perceive the uselessness of all our efforts. Whatever we may do, we die! Whatever we believe, think, attempt, we die. It seems as though we were to die to-morrow without knowing anything, although heartsick with the knowledge which we have gained. Then we feel crushed beneath the consciousness of "the eternal misery of everything," of human powerlessness and the monotony of our actions.

We rise, walk, lean on our window-sill. Opposite us the people are breakfasting, just as they did yesterday, just as they will to-morrow: father, mother, four children. Three years ago the grandmother was still there; then she died. Since we have been neighbors, the father has changed a good deal. He does not notice it; he seems contented, happy. Fool!

They talk of a wedding, then of a death, of the tender chicken which they are eating, of their servant who is dishonest. They worry over a thousand useless and foolish things. Fools!

The sight of the apartment in which they have been living for eighteen years fills me with disgust

## IN THE SUNLIGHT

and indignation. That is life! Four walls, two doors, one window, a bed, some chairs, a table! A prison! Any place in which one lives for a long time becomes a prison! Oh! to flee, to get away, to escape from the well known places, the people, the same actions at the same hours, and above all the same thoughts!

When you are weary enough to cry from morning until night, so weary that you no longer have the strength to reach for a glass of water, tired of the friendly faces which have become irritating because they have been seen so often, sick of the odious and placid neighbors, of the familiar and monotonous objects, of your house, of your street, of your maid who comes to say: "What will monsieur have for dinner?" and who turns away kicking up at each step the ragged edge of her dirty petticoat; when you become weary of your too faithful dog, of the unchanging designs of your draperies, of the regularity of your meals, of sleeping in the same bed, of every action repeated each day, weary even of yourself, of your own voice, of the things which you continually repeat, of the narrow field of your ideas, sick of the sight of your face in the mirror, of your expression when you shave or brush your hair—then it is time to leave, to enter into a new and changing life.

Travel is a kind of door through which we leave the known reality in order to penetrate into an unexplored reality, which seems like a dream. A station! A seaport! A train which whistles with its first escape of steam! A great steamer slowly passing the jetties in order to rush across the seas toward new countries! Who can see that without trembling

## IN THE SUNLIGHT

with envy, without feeling a thrill of longing for distant travels?

We all dream of some favorite country, some of Sweden, others of India; one person likes Greece and another Japan. I ~~reit~~ attracted to Africa by an imperious need, by a longing for the unknown desert, as by the presentiment of an incipient passion.

I left Paris on the 6th of July, 1881. I wished to see this land of sunlight and of sand in midsummer, under the oppressive heat, in the blinding glory of light.

Everyone knows the magnificent verses of the great poet Leconte de Lisle:

"Noon, summer's king, o'erspreading all the plain,  
Falls in silv'ry sheets from the blue heavens above.  
There is no sound. The breathless air's aflame.  
The earth lies slumb'ring in its robe of fire."

This is the noon of the desert, the noon of the motionless and limitless ocean of sand, which made me leave the blossoming banks of the Seine of which Mme. Deshoulières sings, the cool refreshing mornings and the green shade of the woods, to cross these scorching wastes.

There was another reason for my being attracted at this time especially to Algiers. The elusive Bou-Amama was carrying on that fantastical campaign which caused so many foolish things to be said and done. It was also claimed that the Mussulman population was preparing for a general insurrection, that it was going to make a last effort, and that, immediately after the Ramadam, war would break out simultaneously throughout Algiers. I became

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extremely curious to see the Arab at this time, to attempt to understand his soul, a thing of which the colonists never think.

Flaubert would sometimes say: "One can picture to oneself the desert, the pyramids, the Sphinx, without ever having seen them; but what one cannot picture is the head of a Turkish barber squatting before his door."

Would it not be even more interesting to know what is going on inside that head?

### THE SEA

Marseilles is pulsating under the bright sun of a summer's day. It seems to smile with its great flag-decked cafés, its horses covered with straw hats as though dressed for a masquerade, its busy and noisy inhabitants. Everywhere is heard that singing accent which everyone seems to challenge. In other places a native of Marseilles is amusing and seems to be a kind of foreigner murdering the French language; in Marseilles the combination of accents aggravate the original accent, making it truly comical. To hear every one talking like that is really too much, confound it! In the sunlight Marseilles perspires and smells of garlic and countless other things. It smells of the unnamable foods which nibble negroes, Turks, Greeks, Italians, Maltese, Spaniards, English, Corsicans, and even the inhabitants of Marseilles munch, lying down, sitting or idling by the wharves.

In the Joliette basin heavy steamers, their noses turned toward the entrance of the harbor, and covered with men who are loading them with cargo, are getting up steam.

## IN THE SUNLIGHT

One of them, the *Abd-el-Kader*, suddenly begins to bellow, for the whistle no longer exists; it has been replaced by something which sounds like the roar of a wild beast, a frightful voice which comes from the smoking belly of the monster.

The great vessel leaves its anchorage, slowly passes between its motionless mates, leaves the harbor, and quickly, as the captain calls through the speaking-tube his order: "Full speed ahead," it eagerly bounds forward, opens up the sea, leaving behind it a long wake, while the coasts disappear and Marseilles sinks behind the horizon.

It is dinner-time on board. There are very few passengers, for not many people care to go to Africa in July. At the end of the table there are a colonel, an engineer, a physician, and two merchants from Algiers with their wives.

The conversation turns on the country for which we are bound and on the government best adapted to it. The colonel energetically advocates a military government, discusses desert tactics and declares that telegraphy is useless and even dangerous for armies. This enlightened officer must have been the victim of some unpleasantness of war due to the telegraph. The engineer would like to see the colony confided to the care of a bridge and road inspector who would build canals, dams, roads and a thousand other things. The captain of the ship, in a witty way, suggests that a sailor would be much more suitable for the position, as Algiers is only accessible from the sea. The two merchants point out some glaring faults of the present governments; everyone laughs and wonders how a person can be so stupid. Then all go up on deck. Nothing is to

## IN THE SUNLIGHT

be seen but the calm sea without a ripple, shimmering under the silvery moon. The heavy vessel seems to fly over it, leaving in its wake a long foaming track where the seething water seems turned to liquid fire.

The bluish black sky stretches over our heads, dotted with stars hidden for an instant behind the enormous volume of smoke which is issuing from our funnels; the little lantern at the top of the mast looks like a large star wandering among the others. Nothing can be heard but the muffled roaring of the machinery in the depths of the vessel.

How charming are the peaceful evening hours on the deck of a speeding steamer!

We spend the following day dreaming beneath the wide awning, with the sea on all sides. Then night comes, and is again followed by day. We have slept in the narrow cabin, on a berth shaped like a coffin. It is four o'clock in the morning, and we must be up.

What an awakening! A long coast, and in the distance, opposite us, a white spot which grows larger—it is Algiers!

### ALGIERS

Unexpected fairyland which delights the soul! Algiers surpassed my expectations. How pretty it is, this snow-white city in the dazzling light! An immense terrace beneath graceful arcades extends alongside the harbor. Above it rise the big European hotels and the French quarter; still above this is the Arab town, with its strange little white houses, all mixed in together and separated by streets which resemble lighted tunnels. The upper

## IN THE SUNLIGHT

floor is supported by posts painted white; the roofs touch. There are abrupt descents into habitations which are no more than holes, mysterious stairways toward dwellings which look like burrows full of swarming Arab families. A woman passes by, serious and veiled, with bare ankles covered with dust which has accumulated over the perspiration and which are by no means tempting.

From the end of the pier the view of the city is marvelous. You look with ecstasy at this dazzling cascade of houses, which seem to tumble one over the other from the heights of the mountains clear down to the sea. It reminds one of the foam from a torrent, but of a dazzling whiteness; and from place to place a snowy mosque shining in the sunlight appears like a larger bubble.

Everywhere swarms a remarkable population. Countless beggars go about wearing nothing but a shirt, or two carpets sewed together in the shape of a chasuble, or an old bag with holes cut out for the head and arms, always barelegged and barefooted, swearing and fighting, covered with vermin, ragged and smelling like animals. Tartarin would say that they smell of the Turk, for here everything smells of the Turk.

Then there is a whole world of black-skinned youngsters, half-caste Arabs, negroes and whites, a perfect ant-hill of shoe-shiners, as bothersome as flies, thieving and bold, vicious at three years of age, as mischievous as monkeys, who insult you in their native tongue and pursue you with their eternal cry of "Shine, monsieuue!" Everyone uses the familiar "tu," even the cab-drivers. I call the Parisian cab-

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men's attention to this fact as they are outdone in familiarity here.

The very day of my arrival I saw a little incident without any importance and yet which practically sums up the history of Algiers and of colonization here.

While I was sitting before a *café* a young negro forcibly seized my feet and began to blacken my boots with a furious energy. After he had rubbed and polished for about half an hour and made the leather shine like a mirror, I gave him two sous. He thanked me, but did not get up. He remained squatting between my legs, quite motionless, and rolling his eyes as though he were sick. I said: "Run along." He did not answer or move; then, suddenly, snatching up his shoe-box in both arms he started to run as fast as his legs could carry him. I saw a big negro of about sixteen leave a doorway where he had been hiding and pounce on the little fellow. In a few bounds he had caught up with him, then he slapped him, searched him, snatched away his two sous which he stuffed into his pocket and quietly walked away laughing, while the poor youngster bawled in a heart-breaking manner.

I was indignant. My neighbor at table, an officer of the African Division, and my friend, said: "Leave them alone, it is simply hierarchy establishing itself. As long as they are not strong enough to take money from the others, they shine shoes. But as soon as they feel themselves able to whip the smaller ones, they do nothing at all. They watch those who are blacking shoes and then rob them." Then my companion added, laughing: "Almost everybody here does the same thing."

## IN THE SUNLIGHT

The European quarter of Algiers, pretty from a distance, has, when seen from near, the appearance of a new city built in a climate to which it is not suited. On landing, a large sign meets your eye: "Algerian Skating Rink;" and at the first few steps one is shocked, amazed at feeling the mal-adaptation of progress to this country, of the brutal, awkward civilization, so little suited to the customs, climate and people. It is we who appear to be barbarians among these barbarians; half animals though they be, they are at home, and centuries have taught them the customs of which we do not even seem to have grasped the meaning as yet.

Napoleon III. said a wise word (perhaps whispered to him by a minister): "What Algeria needs is not conquerors, but initiators." But we have only remained brutal, clumsy conquerors infatuated with our ready-made ideas. Our morals, our Parisian houses, our customs, offend like glaring mistakes in art, science and learning. Everything that we do seems wrong, a challenge to this country, not so much to the natives as to the land itself.

A few days after my arrival I saw an open-air ball at Mustapha. It was just like the Neuilly fair. Gingerbread booths, shooting galleries, lotteries, somnambulists, clerks dancing the regular Bullier quadrille with shop-girls, while behind the enclosure to which admission was charged, in the broad and sandy exercise ground, hundreds of Arabs lay in the moonlight, motionless in their rags, gravely listening to the noisy tunes to which the French people were dancing.

## IN THE SUNLIGHT

### THE PROVINCE OF ORAN

To go from Algiers to Oran takes a day on the train. At first one crosses the plain of the Mitidja, fertile, shady and populous. This is what is shown to the new arrival in order to prove to him the fertility of our colony. Certainly Mitidja and Kabylie are two admirable countries. In fact, Kabylie has a greater population to the square mile than Calais; Mitidja will soon have the same. What can one wish to develop there? But I am straying from my subject.

The train rolls forward; the cultivated fields disappear; the ground becomes bare and red—typical African soil. The horizon stretches out, sterile and burning. We follow the immense valley of Chelif, inclosed in great gray, desolate mountains, without a tree or a blade of grass. From time to time the mountain line becomes lower and opens up as though better to show the frightful poverty of the soil, burned by the sun. A limitless flat area stretches out, bounded in the distance by the almost invisible heights which blend with the horizon. At intervals on the barren peaks appear great round, white spots, like the eggs of some giant bird. They are the *marabouts* erected to the glory of Allah.

From time to time on the boundless yellow plain one sees a clump of trees and near them men standing about, tall, sunburned Europeans who are watching the train pass by; near them are little tents like big mushrooms, from which rush bearded soldiers. It is a hamlet of farmers protected by a detachment of infantry.

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Along this stretch of sterile and dusty soil we can sometimes distinguish, far away in the distance, a kind of smoke, a light cloud which rises toward the sky and moves along the ground. It is a horseman whose mount is raising the fine burning dust with his hoofs. Each one of these clouds on the plain indicates a man whose almost imperceptible white burnous we at last manage to distinguish.

From time to time we come upon native encampments. We can hardly perceive these villages, near a dried-up stream, where children lead a few goats, sheep or cows to pasture (to use the word "pasture" is truly a mockery). The brown canvas tents, surrounded by dried bushes, mingle with the monotonous color of the land. On the railroad embankment a dark-skinned man with bare, muscular and calfless legs, wrapped in whitish rags, gravely contemplates the iron steed which rushes past him. Farther on we see a group of nomads on the march. The caravan advances slowly in the dust, leaving a cloud behind it. The women and children are riding donkeys or small horses, and a few horsemen take the lead, with a haughty and noble mien.

It is the same all the way along. Whenever the train stops, about every hour, a European village appears; a few houses like those to be seen at Nanterre or Rueil; surrounded by parched trees, one of which bears tri-colored flags, in honor of the Fourteenth of July, and before the gate stands a silent gendarme, exactly like the one at Rueil or at Nanterre.

The heat is intolerable. It becomes impossible to touch any metal object, even in the car. The water from the grounds is hot. The air which rushes

## IN THE SUNLIGHT

through the window seems to have been blown from the door of a furnace. At Orléansville the thermometer registers over 100 degrees in the shade.

We get to Oran for dinner. It is a regular commercial, European city, more Spanish than French, and with nothing of any special interest. In the streets one sees beautiful girls with black eyes, ivory skin and pearly teeth. When the weather is clear, it seems that one can see, far off on the horizon, the coast of Spain, their fatherland.

As soon as one sets foot on this African soil, a strange desire overcomes one—the desire to go farther south. So I bought a ticket to Saïda, and took the little narrow-gauge railroad which climbs up on the table lands. Around this city prowls the elusive Bou-Amama with his horsemen.

After a few hours' travel one reaches the foot-hills of the Atlas range. The train goes up puffing, barely moving; winds round the side of the barren hill, passes beside an immense lake formed by three rivers, whose waters are massed in three valleys by the famous Habra dam. An immense wall, sixteen hundred feet long, on an enormous plain encloses forty-six million cubic feet of water.

This dam gave way the following year, drowning hundreds of men and ruining an entire country. This happened at the time of a great national subscription for some Hungarian or Spanish flood victims. Nobody took any notice of this French disaster.

We then pass through narrow gorges between two mountains which look as though they had recently been burned, they are so red and bare; we travel round summits, skirt the slopes, go miles out

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of our way in order to avoid obstacles and then rush down at full speed into a plain, still zig-zagging a little, as though through force of habit.

The cars are small and the engine as big as that of a street railway. At times it seems worn out, puffs, chokes or sputters, goes along so slowly that one can easily follow it on foot and then suddenly starts off again madly.

The whole countryside is barren and desolate. The king of Africa, the Sun, this great, fierce destroyer, has eaten out the heart of these valleys, leaving only stones and a red dust in which nothing could grow.

Saïda is a little town in the French style which seems to be inhabited only by generals. There are at least ten or twelve of them there, and they always seem to be holding some kind of meeting. One feels inclined to shout to them: "Where is Bou-Amama to-day, General?" The civilian population has absolutely no respect for the uniform.

The inn leaves much to be desired. I lie down on a straw mattress in a white-washed room. The heat is intolerable. I close my eyes and try to sleep. Alas! my window opens on a little courtyard. I hear the dogs barking. They are far, very far away. They seem to be talking to each other. But soon they come nearer; they are up to the houses now, among the vines, in the streets. There are five hundred, perhaps a thousand, starving, ferocious dogs who kept watch in the Spanish encampments on the heights. Once their master is killed or gone, the beasts roam about, dying of hunger; then they find the city, and they surround it like an army. During the day they sleep in the ravines, under the rocks, in

## IN THE SUNLIGHT

the caves in the mountains, and as soon as night falls they invade Saïda to search for food.

Men who come home late at night walk along with a revolver in their hands, followed and sniffed at by twenty or thirty yellow dogs like foxes.

They bark continuously in a frightful manner, enough to make one crazy. Then other noises are heard, the howling of the jackals which are approaching nearer; and at times only one loud, peculiar voice can be heard, that of the hyena, imitating the bark of the dog in order to attract and devour him. This awful uproar lasts until daybreak.

Before the arrival of the French, Saïda had been protected by a little fortress erected by Abd-el-Kader. The new town is in a sort of basin surrounded by bald, rocky heights. A narrow river, across which one can almost jump with closed feet, waters the neighboring fields, in which grow beautiful vineyards. To the south the neighboring mountains resemble a wall; these are the last foothills leading to the high table-land. To the left rises a brilliant red rock, about a hundred and fifty feet high, with the ruins of some masonry on its summit. This is all that is left of the Saïda built by Abd-el-Kader. Seen from the distance, this rock seems to cling to the mountain; but if one climbs it, one remains speechless from surprise and admiration. A deep ravine separates this ancient stronghold of the Emir from the neighboring mountain. This mountain is of red stone and broken, in places, by cracks where the winter rain falls. In the ravine the stream flows amid bushes of pink laurel. From above it looks like an Oriental carpet spread along a corridor. The carpet of flowers seems uninter-

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rupted, varied only from place to place by the green foliage which rises above the flowers.

One descends into this valley by a goat path.

The stream, called a river there (the Oued-Saïda) —for us a mere brook—ripples along the stones under the blossoming bushes, strikes against the rocks, foams, undulates and babbles. The water is warm, almost burning. Enormous crabs run along the banks with a strange speed, raising their claws as soon as they see me. Great green lizards disappear among the leaves. At times a snake glides between the rocks.

The ravine grows narrow, as though it were going to close. A great noise above my head makes me start. An eagle, surprised, flies away from its nest, rises toward the blue sky with slow, strong motions of his wings, which seem to touch both sides of the gorge.

After about an hour one reaches the road which climbs the dusty mountain toward Ain-el-Hadjar.

Before me plodded a bent, old woman in a black skirt and white cap, carrying a basket on her left arm and in her right hand an immense red umbrella, in guise of a parasol. A woman in this country! A peasant in this mournful land where one hardly sees anything but the tall, well-built negress, covered with yellow, red or blue rags, and who leaves in her wake an odor of humanity strong enough to upset the strongest stomach!

Exhausted, the old woman sat down in the dust, panting from the torrid heat. Her face was crossed by countless little wrinkles such as one sees on a piece of crumpled cloth; her look was weary, depressed and desperate.

## IN THE SUNLIGHT

I spoke to her. She was an Alsatian who had been sent with her four sons to this desolate country after the war. She asked me:

"Do you come from over there?"

That "over there" made me sad. I answered: "Yes."

She began to weep. Then she told me her simple little story.

They had been promised some land; and mother and children had come to this country. Now three of her sons were dead as a result of this murderous climate. The remaining one was sick, their land, although extensive, yielding nothing, for they had not a drop of water. She kept repeating: "Cinders, monsieur, burnt cinders. We don't even get a cabbage, not a single cabbage!" She clung to that idea of a cabbage, which, for her, seemed to be the symbol of terrestrial happiness.

I have never seen anything more pitiful than this old Alsatian woman cast away in this burning land of fire, where not even a single cabbage could grow. How often she must have thought of the old country, the green land of her youth, the poor old soul!

On leaving me, she inquired: "Do you know whether they are going to give out lands in Tunisia? They say that the country is good over there. It would be better than here, anyhow. And then perhaps I might save my boy."

All our colonists who have settled on the other side of the Tell might say about the same thing.

I felt a strong desire to continue on farther. But the whole country was at war and I could not venture farther alone. A chance was offered me. A

## IN THE SUNLIGHT

train was leaving to carry provisions to the troops encamped along the salt lakes.

It was a day when the sirocco was blowing. Since morning the south wind had been crossing the country in slow, heavy, devouring gusts. At seven o'clock the little convoy started out, taking along two detachments of infantry with their officers, three cistern-cars full of water and the engineers of the company, as, for the last three weeks, no train had been able to reach the end of the line, part of which the Arabs were able to destroy.

The engine, the "Hyena," starts up noisily and heads straight for the mountain as though it wished to run right through it. Then suddenly it makes a sharp curve, enters a narrow little valley, turns again and comes back, a hundred and fifty feet above the place where it had just been running. It turns again and continues up the mountain, zig-zagging and unfolding like a great ribbon until it gains the top of the mountain.

Here we find vast buildings, factory chimneys, a kind of abandoned city. They are magnificent factories of the Franco-Algerian Company. It is here that the *alfa* was prepared, before the massacre of the Spaniards. This place is called Ain-el-Hadjar.

We continue upward. The engine puffs, groans, slows down and stops. Three times it tries to start again, three times it remains powerless. It backs up in order to get a start, but once more it stops without strength in the middle of a too steep hill.

Then the officers order the soldiers to get out and push the train. We start up again slowly, at the speed of a man walking. All are laughing and joking; the infantrymen are making fun of the engine.

## IN THE SUNLIGHT

At last it is all over. We are now on the high table-lands.

The engineer, leaning out of the window, keeps his eye to the track, which might at any minute be cut; we others are attentively watching the horizon, alert as soon as the slightest cloud of dust appears which might indicate a still invisible horseman. We are carrying rifles and revolvers.

At times a jackal runs by us; an enormous vulture flies away, abandoning the carcass of a camel almost entirely consumed; wild hens, which look very much like partridge, hide in the clumps of dwarf palms.

At the little station of Tafraoua two companies of infantry are encamped. Many Spaniards had been killed here.

At Kralfallah we find a company of zouaves hurriedly building up a defense, strengthening it with rails, beams, telegraph posts, bags of *alfa*, anything that they can find. We have luncheon here; and the three officers, all three young and gay, the captain, and the first and second lieutenants, offer us coffee.

The train starts again. It runs along endlessly through a boundless plain to which tufts of *alfa* give the appearance of a calm sea. The sirocco becomes intolerable, fanning our faces with the burning air of the desert. At times a vague form appears on the horizon. It looks like a lake, an island, rocks in the water; it is a mirage. On a little slope we see some blackened stones and some human bones: the remains of a Spaniard. Then we see some more dead camels, all of them being eaten by the vultures.

We cross a forest. What a forest! An ocean of sand where occasional clumps of juniper trees look

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like heads of salad in a gigantic vegetable garden. After that we no longer see any green except the *alfa*, which grows in round tufts and covers the ground as far as one can see.

At times we think we see a horseman in the distance, but he disappears; perhaps we were mistaken.

We arrive at Oued-Fallette, which is in the midst of a dreary and deserted stretch of land. Then I start out walking with two companions, still going southward. We climb a low hill in a scorching heat. The sirocco sheds fire; it dries the perspiration on the face as soon as it appears, burns the lips and the eyes, and parches the throat. Under every stone we find scorpions.

Around the motionless convoy, which from the distance looks like a great black beast crouching on the parched ground, the soldiers are loading wagons which have been sent from the neighboring encampment. Then they move away in the dust, slowly, with a weary step, under the burning sun. We watch them for a long, long time as they plod along, and finally we can see only the gray cloud which rises above them.

Six of us now remain near the train. We can no longer touch anything; everything burns. The brass trimmings of the cars seem to have been reddened by fire. We utter a cry of pain if we happen to touch the barrel of a gun.

A few days ago the tribe of Rezaïna went over to the rebels and crossed the salt lake which we had been unable to reach, as we were forced to turn back. The heat had been so intense as the fugitive tribe crossed this dried-up swamp that all their mules died

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from thirst, as well as sixteen children who passed away in their mother's arms.

The engine whistles. We leave Oued-Fallette. A remarkable incident made this place famous at this time.

A post was established there, guarded by a detachment of the 15th Infantry. Well, one night, two Arabs, who had ridden ten hours to carry a message from the commanding general at Saïda, arrived at the outposts. According to the custom, they waved a torch in order to make themselves known. The sentinel, a recruit fresh from France, ignorant of the rules and customs and who had not been informed by his superiors, fired at the messengers. The poor devils advanced, nevertheless; the whole post ran to arms; the men took up their position and a terrible fusillade began. After about a hundred and fifty shots, the two Arabs finally retreated, one of them with a bullet in his shoulder. The following day they returned to headquarters, bringing with them their despatches.

### BOU-AMAMA

It would be a shrewd man who could say, even today, exactly who or what was Bou-Amama. This elusive joker, after harassing our African division, disappeared so completely that people are beginning to doubt whether he actually existed.

Trustworthy officers, who believed that they knew him, described him to me; but other persons, no less truthful, sure of having seen him, depicted him altogether differently.

At any rate, this prowler was only the head of a

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small band of men, probably driven to revolt by starvation. These men fought only to rob farms or to pillage convoys. They seemed to have been moved neither by hatred, nor by religious fanaticism, but by hunger. Our method of colonization being to ruin the Arabs, to rob them unceasingly, to pursue them without mercy, to make them die of starvation, we shall see many more insurrections.

Perhaps another cause for this campaign is the presence of Spanish cultivators on the high plateau.

In this ocean of *alfa*, in this desolate green stretch, motionless under the burning sky, lived a veritable nation, hordes of brown-skinned men, adventurers whom misery or other causes had driven from their fatherland. More savage, more feared than the Arabs, isolated, far from any city, law or authority, they behaved, it is said, as did their forefathers in a new country; they were violent, bloodthirsty, a terror to the primitive inhabitants. The vengeance of the Arabs was fearful. Here, in a few lines, is the apparent origin of the revolt:

Two Mussulman priests were openly preaching revolt in a southern tribe. Lieutenant Weinbrunner was sent out against them with orders to capture the chief of this tribe. The French officer had an escort of *four* men. He was murdered.

Colonel Innocenti was commanded to avenge this death and he was given the assistance of the *Agha* of Saïda.

On the road the followers of the *Agha* met the Trafis, who were also on their way to join Colonel Innocenti. Quarrels arose between the two tribes; the Trafis turned around and went over to Bou-Amama. It is here that occurred the affair of Chel-

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lala, which has already been told many times. After his convoy had been sacked, Colonel Innocenti, who seems to have been accused by public sentiment, returned to Kreider by forced marches in order to get re-enforcements, thus leaving the road entirely clear to his adversaries, who took advantage of the fact.

Let me mention a strange fact. On the same day official despatches reported Bou-Amama at the same time in two different places about a hundred miles apart.

This chief, profiting by the liberty which had been given him, passed within five miles of Géryville. On the way he killed Brigadier Bringeard, who had been sent out with only a few men into an open country in revolt in order to establish telegraphic communications. Then he proceeded northward.

He now crossed the territory of the Hassassenas and of the Harrars, and apparently commanded these two tribes to undertake a general massacre of the Spaniards which command they were to carry out shortly afterward.

At last he arrived at Aïn-Kétifa, and two days later he was camping at Haci-Tirsine, only ten miles from Saïda.

The military authorities, at last becoming disturbed, on the evening of the tenth of June warned the Franco-Algerian Company to call in all its agents, as the country was not safe. Trains ran all night to the extreme limit of the line; but it was impossible in a few hours to send for all the cultivators spread over a territory of a hundred miles, and on the eleventh, at daybreak, the massacres began.

They were carried out principally by the two

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tribes, the Hassassenas and the Harrars, who were exasperated at seeing the Spaniards occupying their lands.

And yet, on the pretext of not wishing to incite them to rebellion, nothing was done to these two tribes who massacred almost three hundred people—men, women and children. Arab horsemen found loaded with spoils, with the dresses of Spanish women hidden under their saddles, were released, it is said, on pretext that proofs were lacking. So, on the evening of the tenth, Bou-Amama was camping at Haci-Tirsine, twenty-two miles from Saïda. At the same time General Cérez was telegraphing to the governor that the rebel chief was trying to return south.

During the following days the bold marabout pillaged the villages of Tafraoua and of Kralfallah, loading down his camels with spoils, carrying away several million francs' worth of provisions and merchandise.

Once more he returned to Haci-Tirsine in order to reorganize his band of followers. Then he divided his convoy in two parts, one of which went toward Aïn-Kétifa, where it was stopped and pillaged by the *goum* of Sharraoui (*division Brunetière*).

The other section, commanded by Bou-Amama himself, found itself caught between General Détrie's column encamped at El-Maya and that of Col. Mallaret posted near Kreider, at Ksar-el-Krelifa. He had to pass between the two camps, a task which was by no means easy. Then Bou-Amama sent out a detachment of cavalry to the camp occupied by General Détrie, who pursued it with its whole detachment as far as Aïn-Sfisifa, away beyond the Chott,

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persuaded that he was on the track of the marabout. The stratagem was successful. The coast was clear. The day after the general's departure the rebel chief was occupying his camp; this was the fourteenth of June.

On the other hand, Colonel Mallaret, instead of guarding the passage at Kreider, had pitched his camp at Ksar-el-Krelifa, two miles farther on. Bou-Amama immediately sent out a strong detachment of horsemen to pass in file before the colonel, who contented himself with firing the six cannon-shot which have become legendary. And during this time the convoy of loaded camels was quietly fording the salt lake at the Kreider, the only point where it was feasible. From there the marabout must have left his provisions with his tribe, the Mogrars, about two hundred miles south of Géryville.

Where did I get all this precise information, some may ask. From everybody. Naturally, some will dispute one point, some another. I can affirm nothing, as I did nothing but gather the information which seemed to me most likely. It seems to be impossible, in Algeria, to obtain accurate information about a thing which occurred a mile from where one happens to be. As for military news, it seemed, during this whole campaign, to have been supplied by some practical jokers. Bou-Amama was reported, on the same day, at six different points by six different officers who thought that they had taken him. A complete collection of official despatches, with a little supplement containing those from authorized agencies, would make a very amusing book. Certain despatches whose improbability was too evident were stopped in the offices at Algiers.

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A witty caricature, made by one of the colonists, seemed to have explained the situation very well. It represented a fat old general, covered with gold braid, and with a heavy mustache, facing the desert. He was watching with a perplexed look the immense stretch of land, bare and undulating, whose limits could not be perceived, and he was murmuring: "They are out there—somewhere!" Then turning around to one of his staff officers, standing motionless behind him, he exclaimed in a firm voice: "Telegraph the government that the enemy is before me and that I am starting in its pursuit."

The only reliable information which could be obtained came from Spanish prisoners escaped from Bou-Amama. I was able, through an interpreter, to talk with one of these men, and this is what he told me:

He called himself Blas Rojo Pélisaire. On the evening of the tenth of June he and his comrades were at the head of a convoy of seven carts, when along the road, they found other carts broken, and between the wheels the murdered drivers. One of them was still alive. They were attending to him when a troop of Arabs rushed on them. The Spaniards had but one gun—they surrendered; nevertheless, all were massacred with the exception of Blas Rojo; who was probably spared on account of his youth and good looks. It is known that Arabs are not indifferent to manly beauty. He was led to their camp, where he found other prisoners. At midnight one of them was killed without any reason. He was a mechanic (a man whose duty it was to take care of the brakes of the carts) called Domingo. The following day, the eleventh, Blas learned

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that other prisoners had been killed during the night. It was the day of the great massacre. They remained in that place, and that same evening, the horsemen brought in two women and a child.

On the twelfth they struck camp and marched all day.

On the thirteenth, in the evening, they camped at Dayat-Kered.

On the fourteenth they marched in the direction of Ksar-Krelifa. This was the day of the Mallaret affair. The prisoner did not hear the cannon, which fact leads us to believe that Bou-Amama sent off a party of horsemen to file past the French line, while the convoy of plunder accompanied by Blas crossed the salt lake a few miles further up, where they could not be seen.

For a week they zig-zagged aimlessly about the country. When they arrived at Tis-Moulins, the discordant leaders separated, each taking along his own prisoners.

Bou-Amama was kindly to the prisoners, especially to the women, whom he allowed to sleep in a special tent under guard.

One of them, a beautiful girl of about eighteen, was forced to live with a Trafi chief, who threatened her with death if she should resist. But the chief refused to sanction their union.

Blas Rojo was attached to Bou-Amama's service, but he did not see him. He only saw his son, who directed the military operations. He was a tall, thin, dark, pale young fellow, with large eyes and a small beard, and looked to be about thirty. He owned two chestnut horses, one of which, a French one, belonged, it seems, to Commander Jacquet.

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The prisoner had no knowledge of the Kreider affair.

Blas Rojo managed to escape into the neighborhood of Bas-Yala, but, not knowing the country very well, he was forced to follow dry river-beds, and after walking for three days and three nights he arrived at Marhoum. Bou-Amama had with him five hundred horsemen and three hundred foot soldiers, besides a convoy of camels destined to carry the booty.

For two weeks after the massacre trains ran day and night on the little railroad along the salt lakes. They were continually gathering in poor mutilated Spaniards and tall, beautiful girls, naked and bleeding. The inhabitants of the country say that the military authorities could have avoided this butchery with a little foresight. They were unable, however, to manage a handful of rebels. Why were our perfected weapons powerless against the old-fashioned Arab muskets? That is for others to find out and explain.

The Arabs have, at any rate, one advantage over us against which we vainly strive. They are sons of the soil. Living on a few figs and a pinch of flour, tireless in this climate which exhausts men from the north, riding horses as sober as themselves and, like them, impervious to heat, they can ride sixty or seventy-five miles a day. Having neither baggage, convoys, nor provisions to drag along with them, they move with surprising rapidity, pass between the camps of two columns in order to attack and pillage a village which is thought to be perfectly secure, disappear without leaving any trace, and then return suddenly when they are thought to be far away.

## IN THE SUNLIGHT

In European warfare, no matter how promptly an army marches, it cannot move without the fact being known. The mass of baggage fatally hinders speed and always indicates the road which has been taken. A party of Arabs, on the contrary, leaves no more indications of its whereabouts than a flying bird. These wandering horsemen come and go around us with the speed of a swallow.

When they attack, they can almost always be conquered, and are beaten notwithstanding their courage. But it is almost impossible to pursue them; they can never be caught when they are fleeing, therefore they take care to avoid encounters, and, as a rule, they are satisfied to harass our troops. They charge with impetuosity, galloping furiously on their thin horses, rushing forward like a tempest of floating garments and dust.

Still galloping, they discharge their long guns, and then, suddenly describing a sharp curve, they tear away at full speed just as they came, leaving here and there on the ground behind them a white bundle, which flutters like a wounded bird with blood on its wings.

# AT LOËCHE

DIARY OF THE MARQUIS DE ROSEVEYRE

Loëche, June 12, 1880.

I HAVE been ordered to spend a month at Loëche! Merciful heavens! To think of spending one whole month in this town which is said to be the gloomiest, the deadliest, the most tiresome of all the watering places! What am I saying, a town? It is a hole, scarcely even a village! In short, I have been condemned to a month in the penitentiary!

*June 13.*—I dreamed all night about this frightful trip. I have just one thing left to do. I must take a companion with me! That might help me pass the time. And then this will also give me the chance to find out whether or not I am prepared for married life.

A month in *tête-à-tête* with a woman, just we two, with long talks at any time of day or night! The deuce!

True, it is not as serious to take a woman for a month as to take her for a lifetime, but it is much more serious than to take her for a shorter time. Of course I could always provide for her and send her away; but then I would be left alone in Loëche, a thing which I would not in the least relish!

The choice will be difficult. I wish neither a co-

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quette nor a fool. I do not wish to be made ridiculous nor to be ashamed of her. I am willing that people should say: "The Marquis de Roseveyre is in luck," but I do not want them to whisper: "That poor Marquis de Roseveyre!" On the whole, I want my temporary companion to have all the qualities which I shall demand of my permanent companion. The only difference there is to be made is the same which exists between a new article and one bought at a bargain. Bah! It is easy enough to find, if one takes the trouble to look!

*June 14.*—Bertha! The very person! Twenty! Twenty, pretty, just graduated from the Conservatoire, waiting for a part, a future star. Good manners, a proud bearing, wit and—love! A bargain which can easily pass for a new article.

*June 15.*—She is free! She accepts, having no business or other engagements. I myself ordered her gowns, in order to be sure that she would not look common.

*June 20.*—Basle. She sleeps. I will begin my traveling notes.

She is quite charming. When she met me at the station, I did not recognize her; she looked like a woman of the world. That child certainly has a future ahead of her—on the stage.

Her manner seemed entirely changed; her walk, bearing, gestures, smile, voice, everything was irreproachable. Her hair was dressed divinely, in a charming and simple manner, like a woman who no longer has to attract attention and please every one, but who wishes to be agreeable in a discreet manner to one only. Everything about her showed this. It was so delicately and completely indicated, the

## AT LOECHE

change seemed to be so clever and complete that I offered her my arm just as I would have done to my wife. She took it with ease, as though she were really such.

Alone in the train we first sat motionless and silent. Then she lifted her veil and smiled. Nothing more. A well-bred smile. Oh! I feared the embrace, the comedy of tenderness, the eternal and hackneyed game of women of her kind; but she controlled herself. She is very clever. We conversed a little like married people, a little like strangers. She was charming. She often smiled when she looked at me. It was I who now felt like kissing her. But I remained calm.

At the frontier an official covered with braid quickly opened the door and asked me:

“Your name, monsieur?”

I was surprised. I answered:

“Marquis de Roseveyre.”

“Where are you going?”

“To the baths at Loëche, in the Valais.”

He wrote all this down, and then continued:

“Is madame your wife?”

What was to be done? What could I answer? I hesitated and lifted my eyes to her. She was pale and looking out in the distance. . . . I felt that I might shame her needlessly. And then, she was to be my companion for a month.

I answered: “Yes, monsieur.”

I saw her suddenly blush. I was pleased.

When I arrived here at the hotel the proprietor held out the register to her. She immediately passed it to me, and I knew that she was watching me write. It was our first evening of intimacy!

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Once the page turned over, who would read this register? I wrote: "Marquis and Marquise de Roseveyre, on their way to Loëche."

*June 21.*—Basle, 6 A.M. We are leaving for Bern. I have certainly been lucky.

*June 21.*—10 P.M. What a strange day it has been! I am quite moved. How foolish and ridiculous!

During the trip we spoke but little. She had risen early and was tired; she was dozing.

As soon as we reached Bern we wished to see the panorama of the Alps, which I did not know at all; we started out through the town like a new-married couple.

Suddenly we perceived an immense plain, and away over there, far away in the distance, the glaciers. Seen from the distance like that they did not look immense, and yet this view thrilled me. A glorious setting sun was shining down upon us; the heat was intense. Yet those mountains of ice remained cold and white. The Jungfrau, the Virgin, towering over her brothers, with her broad side stretched toward us, and all around her the snow-capped giants raised their heads, seeming ever paler in the dying day, standing out like silver against the azure sky.

Their gigantic and motionless mass gave me the impression of a new and surprising world, of steep regions, dead and frozen, but as fascinating as the sea, full of a mysterious power and seduction. The air which had caressed these ever-frozen heights seemed to come to us across the blossoming country, different from that of the field. It contained some-

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thing harsh, strong and sterile, like the flavor of inaccessible regions.

Bertha, bewildered, was looking on, without pronouncing a word.

Suddenly she took my hand and pressed it. I myself felt a kind of fever, this exaltation which comes over us at unexpected sights. I took this trembling little hand and carried it to my lips; and I believed that I kissed it with affection.

I was quite upset. What was the cause? She or the glaciers?

*June 24.—Loëche, 10 P.M.* The whole trip was delightful. We spent a half a day at Thun, looking over the delightful outline of the mountains, which we were to cross the following day.

At sunset we crossed the lake, probably the most beautiful one in Switzerland. Mules were waiting for us. We mounted them and started off. We breakfasted in a little town and then began the ascent of the narrow wooded gorge, continually overlooked by high peaks. From time to time, on the slopes which seemed to come down from heaven, we could distinguish little white spots, little Swiss cottages, clinging there, no one knows how. We crossed torrents, and, at times, between two pine-covered peaks we would see an immense pyramid of snow, which looked as though it were near enough to reach in twenty minutes, and yet which was at least twenty-four hours distant.

Sometimes we crossed narrow little plains littered with rocks, as though two mountains had clashed in this arena and had left on this battlefield these remains of their granite limbs.

Bertha, exhausted, was sleeping on her animal,

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occasionally opening her eyes to see where she was. Finally she slept, and I supported her with my arm, happy to feel this contact of her warm body. Night came; we were still climbing. We stopped before the door of a little inn, lost in the mountains.

How we slept that night!

At daybreak I ran to the window and uttered a cry. Bertha followed me, and we stood there, surprised and delighted. We had slept in the snows.

All about us enormous, barren mountains, whose gray bones showed through their white cloaks, mournful, frozen mountains without a tree, rose so high that they seemed inaccessible.

An hour after starting out we perceived, at the bottom of the funnel of granite and snow, a black, gloomy lake without a ripple, which we followed for a long time. A guide brought us a few edelweiss, the pale flowers of the glaciers. Bertha pinned them to her waist.

Suddenly the rocky gorge opened out before us, uncovering a wonderful view: the whole stretch of the Piedmontese Alps beyond the valley of the Rhône. High peaks overlooked the lesser heights. There was Mount Rose, solemn and heavy; the Cervin, that straight pyramid where so many men have died, the Dent du Midi, and a hundred other white points, sparkling like diamonds under the white sun.

Suddenly the path which we had been following stopped at the edge of a precipice, and far down, at the bottom of the black hole, seven thousand feet deep, inclosed in four walls of straight, brown, stern rocks, on a field of grass, we noticed a few

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white specks, like sheep in a field. They were the houses of Loëche.

The road being dangerous, we were forced to dismount from the mules. The path descends along the rock, winding, twisting and turning, always overlooking the precipice and the village, which grows as we come nearer. This is known as the pass of the Gemmi, one of the most beautiful if not *the* most beautiful of the Alps.

Bertha was leaning on me, uttering little cries of joy and fear, happy and timid as a child. Once, when we were a few feet behind the guide and hidden by an outjutting rock, she kissed me. I held her close. . . .

I had said to myself:

"At Loëche I will take care to let it be understood that I am not with my wife."

But everywhere that we have been I had treated her as such, and she had passed for the Marquise de Roseveyre. At this late date I could scarcely register her under another name. And then, I would have offended her, and really she was charming.

But I said to her:

"My dear, you are bearing my name; I am thought to be your husband; I expect you to act with extreme caution and discretion. Don't make friends, or talk or gossip. Let people think that you are proud and act so that I may not have to regret the step which I have taken."

She answered:

"Never fear, my little René."

*June 26.*—Loëche is not at all dismal. It is wild, but very beautiful. This wall of rocks, seven thousand feet high, from which spring a hundred differ-

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ent torrents like ribbons of silver; this constant noise of rushing water; this village buried in the Alps, from which one looks up to the sun as from the bottom of a deep well; the neighboring glacier, so white in the notch in the mountain, and this valley, full of brooks, full of trees, of freshness and of life, which descends toward the Rhône and shows in the distance the snowy peaks of the Piedmont: all this thrills and charms me. Perhaps—if Bertha were not here?

This child is a gem, more reserved and distinguished than any one. I hear people saying:

“That little marquise is truly charming!”

*June 27.*—First bath. One goes directly from the room to the pool, where twenty bathers, clad in long woolen robes, are already dipping in the water, men and women together. Some eat, some read, some talk. We push before us little floating tables. Sometimes we play tag, which is not entirely proper. Seen from the galleries which surround the bath, we look like enormous toads in a tub. Bertha sat in this gallery and talked to me a little. Everybody looked at her.

*June 28.*—Second bath. I spent four hours in the water. In a week I will spend eight hours there. As co-plungers I have the Prince of Vanoris (Italy), Count Lovenberg (Austria), Baron Samuel Vernhe (Hungary or elsewhere), plus about fifteen persons of less importance, but all noble. In watering places everybody is noble. One after the other they asked to be introduced to Bertha. I answer: “Yes!” and slip away. They think me jealous; how foolish!

*June 29.*—Consternation! Princess Vanoris her-

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self came up to me as we were returning to the hotel and asked to meet my wife. I introduced Bertha, but I asked her to avoid this lady as much as possible.

*July 2.*—The prince collared us yesterday and brought us to his apartments, where all the bathers of note take tea. Bertha was certainly more charming than any of the other women. What can I do?

*July 3.*—After all, I can't help it! Among these thirty noblemen there must be at least ten imaginary ones! Among these sixteen or seventeen women are there more than twelve who are really married; and among these twelve are there more than six of them above reproach? So much the worse for them, so much the worse for them! They wished it!

*July 10.*—Bertha is the queen of Loëche! Everybody is wild about her; they adore her and spoil her. She is superb, graceful and distinguished. Everybody envies me. Princess Vanoris asked me:

"Tell me, marquis, where did you find that treasure?"

I felt a strong desire to answer:

"First prize at Conservatoire, engaged at the Odéon, free after August 5, 1880!"

Heavens! How she would have looked if I had said that!

*July 20.*—Bertha is truly surprising. Never has she failed to show the proper tact or taste; she is a wonder!

\* \* \* \* \*

*August 10.*—Paris. All is over! I feel sad. The day before our departure I thought that every one would cry.

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We had decided to watch the sun rise from the Torrenthorn, then to come back before leaving. We started out on mules toward night. The guides were carrying lanterns. The long cavern straggled along the winding path through the pine forest. Then we crossed through pasture lands, where herds of cows roam around at large. Then we reached the stony region, where even grass no longer grows.

At times, through the darkness, we could distinguish, either to the right or to the left, a white mass, a heap of snow piled up in a crevasse in the mountain.

The cold was becoming biting, stinging the eyes and the skin. The dry wind of the heights was blowing, drying our throats and bringing with it the icy breath of hundreds of snowy peaks.

When we arrived at the summit it was still night. We unpacked all the provisions so that we could drink champagne to the rising sun.

The sky was growing lighter. We could already see a gulf at our feet, and then, a short distance away, another peak.

The whole horizon seemed livid, without our being able to distinguish anything in the distance.

Soon, to the left, we discovered an enormous peak, the Jungfrau, then another, and then another. They appeared little by little, as though rising with the dawning day. We stood there, bewildered at finding ourselves thus surrounded by these giants in this desolate country of eternal snow. Suddenly, opposite us, another endless chain unfolded itself, the Piedmont. Other peaks appeared to the north. This was indeed the immense land of great mountains, with icy brows, from the Rhindenhorn, as

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massive as its name, to the faint outline of the patriarch of the Alps, the Mont Blanc. Some were straight and proud, others were bent and looked deformed, but all were equally white, as though some god had thrown over the hunchbacked earth a cloth of immaculate whiteness.

Some looked near enough to touch; others were so far away that they could barely be distinguished.

The sky grew red, and all the peaks blushed. They looked as though the clouds had bled upon them. It was superb, awe-inspiring. Soon the flaming color paled and the whole army of peaks gradually grew pink, of a soft and tender pink, like the gowns of a young girl.

The sun appeared above the quilt of snow. Then, suddenly, the whole land of glaciers turned white, of a dazzling white, as though the horizon were full of silver domes.

The women looked on, enraptured. They started as the cork popped from a champagne bottle. Prince de Vanoris offered a glass to Bertha and cried:

"I drink to the health of the Marquise de Roseveyre!"

She stood up on her mule and answered:

"I drink to all my friends!"

Three hours later we took the train for Geneva, in the valley of the Rhône.

As soon as we were alone, Bertha, who had been so happy and gay a little while ago, burst out sobbing, her face hidden in her hands. I fell to my knees, asking:

"What is the matter? What is the matter? Tell me, dearie, what is the matter?"

She stammered through her tears:

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"It—it—it's all over, this being respectable!"

At that instant I certainly was on the point of committing a great blunder. I did not.

As soon as we reached Paris I left Bertha. Later on I would not have had the strength of will.

(The diary of the Marquis de Roseveyre shows nothing of interest during the following two years. On July 20, 1883, we find the following lines) :

*July 20, 1883.—Florence.* Sad memories were brought back to me to-day. I was walking in the Cassines when a lady stopped her carriage and called me. It was Princess Vanoris. As soon as I came within speaking distance she called:

"Oh, marquis, my dear marquis, how glad I am to see you! Quick, quick, give me news of the marquise; she is undoubtedly the most charming woman that I have ever met in all my life."

I stood there, surprised, not knowing what to say, and with a sad feeling in my heart. I stammered:

"Don't speak of her to me, princess; I lost her three years ago."

She took my hand, saying:

"Oh! I sympathize with you, my poor friend."

She left me. I walked home, sad and discontented, thinking of Bertha as though we had just parted.

Fate often makes mistakes.

How often respectable women were born to be otherwise, and prove it.

Poor Bertha! How many of the others were born to be respectable. And those, more than the others, perhaps— But—I must forget her.

## BERTHA

D R. BONNET, my old friend—one sometimes has friends older than one's self—had often invited me to spend some time with him at Riom, and, as I did not know Auvergne, I made up my mind to visit him in the summer of 1876.

I arrived by the morning train, and the first person I saw on the platform was the doctor. He was dressed in a gray suit, and wore a soft, black, wide-brimmed, high-crowned felt hat, narrow at the top like a chimney pot, a hat which hardly any one except an Auvergnat would wear, and which reminded one of a charcoal burner. Dressed like that, the doctor had the appearance of an old young man, with his spare body under his thin coat, and his large head covered with white hair.

He embraced me with that evident pleasure which country people feel when they meet long-expected friends, and, stretching out his arm, he said proudly:

"This is Auvergne!" I saw nothing before me except a range of mountains, whose summits, which resembled truncated cones, must have been extinct volcanoes.

Then, pointing to the name of the station, he said:

"*Riom*, the fatherland of magistrates, the pride of the magistracy, and which ought rather to be the fatherland of doctors."

"Why?" I asked.

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"Why?" he replied with a laugh. "If you transpose the letters, you have the Latin word *mori*, to die. That is the reason why I settled here, my young friend."

And, delighted at his own joke, he carried me off, rubbing his hands.

As soon as I had swallowed a cup of coffee, he made me go and see the town. I admired the druggist's house, and the other noted houses, which were all black, but as pretty as bric-à-brac, with their façades of sculptured stone. I admired the statue of the Virgin, the patroness of butchers, and he told me an amusing story about this, which I will relate some other time, and then Dr. Bonnet said to me:

"I must beg you to excuse me for a few minutes while I go and see a patient, and then I will take you to Chatel-Guyon, so as to show you the general aspect of the town, and all the mountain chain of the Puy-de-Dôme, before lunch. You can wait for me outside; I shall only go upstairs and come down immediately."

He left me outside one of those old, gloomy, silent, melancholy houses, which one sees in the provinces, and this one appeared to look particularly sinister, and I soon discovered the reason. All the large windows on the first floor were boarded half way up. The upper part of them alone could be opened, as if one had wished to prevent the people who were locked up in that huge stone box from looking into the street.

When the doctor came down again, I told him how it struck me, and he replied:

"You are quite right; the poor creature who is

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living there must never see what is going on outside. She is a madwoman, or rather an idiot, what you Normans would call a *Niente*. It is a miserable story, but a very singular pathological case at the same time. Shall I tell you?"

I begged him to do so, and he continued:

"Twenty years ago the owners of this house, who were my patients, had a daughter who was like all other girls, but I soon discovered that while her body became admirably developed, her intellect remained stationary.

"She began to walk very early, but she could not talk. At first I thought she was deaf, but I soon discovered that, although she heard perfectly, she did not understand anything that was said to her. Violent noises made her start and frightened her, without her understanding how they were caused.

"She grew up into a superb woman, but she was dumb, from an absolute want of intellect. I tried all means to introduce a gleam of intelligence into her brain, but nothing succeeded. I thought I noticed that she knew her nurse, though as soon as she was weaned, she failed to recognize her mother. She could never pronounce that word which is the first that children utter and the last which soldiers murmur when they are dying on the field of battle. She sometimes tried to talk, but she produced nothing but incoherent sounds.

"When the weather was fine, she laughed continually, and emitted low cries which might be compared to the twittering of birds; when it rained she cried and moaned in a mournful, terrifying manner, which sounded like the howling of a dog before a death occurs in a house.

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"She was fond of rolling on the grass, as young animals do, and of running about madly, and she would clap her hands every morning, when the sun shone into her room, and would insist, by signs, on being dressed as quickly as possible, so that she might get out.

"She did not appear to distinguish between people, between her mother and her nurse, or between her father and me, or between the coachman and the cook. I particularly liked her parents, who were very unhappy on her account, and went to see them nearly every day. I dined with them quite frequently, which enabled me to remark that Bertha (they had called her Bertha) seemed to recognize the various dishes, and to prefer some to others. At that time she was twelve years old, but as fully formed in figure as a girl of eighteen, and taller than I was. Then the idea struck me of developing her greediness, and by this means of cultivating some slight power of discrimination in her mind, and to force her, by the diversity of flavors, if not to reason, at any rate to arrive at instinctive distinctions, which would of themselves constitute a kind of process that was necessary to thought. Later on, by appealing to her passions, and by carefully making use of those which could serve our purpose, we might hope to obtain a kind of reaction on her intellect, and by degrees increase the unconscious action of her brain.

"One day I put two plates before her, one of soup, and the other of very sweet vanilla cream. I made her taste each of them successively, and then I let her choose for herself, and she ate the plate of cream. In a short time I made her very greedy, so

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greedy that it appeared as if the only idea she had in her head was the desire for eating. She perfectly recognized the various dishes, and stretched out her hands toward those that she liked, and took hold of them eagerly, and she used to cry when they were taken from her. Then I thought I would try and teach her to come to the dining-room when the dinner bell rang. It took a long time, but I succeeded in the end. In her vacant intellect a vague correlation was established between sound and taste, a correspondence between the two senses, an appeal from one to the other, and consequently a sort of connection of ideas—if one can call that kind of instinctive hyphen between two organic functions an idea—and so I carried my experiments further, and taught her, with much difficulty, to recognize meal times by the clock.

"It was impossible for me for a long time to attract her attention to the hands, but I succeeded in making her remark the clockwork and the striking apparatus. The means I employed were very simple; I asked them not to have the bell rung for lunch, and everybody got up and went into the dining-room when the little brass hammer struck twelve o'clock, but I found great difficulty in making her learn to count the strokes. She ran to the door each time she heard the clock strike, but by degrees she learned that all the strokes had not the same value as far as regarded meals, and she frequently fixed her eyes, guided by her ears, on the dial of the clock.

"When I noticed that, I took care every day at twelve, and at six o'clock, to place my fingers on the figures twelve and six, as soon as the moment she

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was waiting for had arrived, and I soon noticed that she attentively followed the motion of the small brass hands, which I had often turned in her presence.

"She had understood! Perhaps I ought rather to say that she had grasped the idea. I had succeeded in getting the knowledge, or, rather, the sensation, of the time into her, just as is the case with carp, who certainly have no clocks, when they are fed every day exactly at the same time.

"When once I had obtained that result all the clocks and watches in the house occupied her attention almost exclusively. She spent her time in looking at them, listening to them, and in waiting for meal time, and once something very funny happened. The striking apparatus of a pretty little Louis XVI clock that hung at the head of her bed having got out of order, she noticed it. She sat for twenty minutes with her eyes on the hands, waiting for it to strike ten, but when the hands passed the figure she was astonished at not hearing anything; so stupefied was she, indeed, that she sat down, no doubt overwhelmed by a feeling of violent emotion such as attacks us in the face of some terrible catastrophe. And she had the wonderful patience to wait until eleven o'clock in order to see what would happen, and as she naturally heard nothing, she was suddenly either seized with a wild fit of rage at having been deceived and imposed upon by appearances, or else overcome by that fear which some frightened creature feels at some terrible mystery, and by the furious impatience of a passionate individual who meets with some obstacle; she took up the tongs from the fireplace and struck the clock so violently that she broke it to pieces in a moment.

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"It was evident, therefore, that her brain did act and calculate, obscurely it is true, and within very restricted limits, for I could never succeed in making her distinguish persons as she distinguished the time; and to stir her intellect, it was necessary to appeal to her passions, in the material sense of the word, and we soon had another, and alas! a very terrible proof of this!

"She had grown up into a splendid girl, a perfect type of a race, a sort of lovely and stupid Venus. She was sixteen, and I have rarely seen such perfection of form, such suppleness and such regular features. I said she was a Venus; yes, a fair, stout, vigorous Venus, with large, bright, vacant eyes, which were as blue as the flowers of the flax plant; she had a large mouth with full lips, the mouth of a glutton, of a sensualist, a mouth made for kisses. Well, one morning her father came into my consulting room with a strange look on his face, and, sitting down without even replying to my greeting, he said:

"I want to speak to you about a very serious matter. Would it be possible—would it be possible for Bertha to marry?"

"Bertha to marry! Why, it is quite impossible!"

"Yes, I know, I know," he replied. "But reflect, doctor. Don't you think—perhaps—we hoped—if she had children—it would be a great shock to her, but a great happiness, and—who knows whether maternity might not rouse her intellect?"

"I was in a state of great perplexity. He was right, and it was possible that such a new situation,

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and that wonderful instinct of maternity, which beats in the hearts of the lower animals as it does in the heart of a woman, which makes the hen fly at a dog's jaws to defend her chickens, might bring about a revolution, an utter change in her vacant mind, and set the motionless mechanism of her thoughts in motion. And then, moreover, I immediately remembered a personal instance. Some years previously I had owned a spaniel bitch who was so stupid that I could do nothing with her, but when she had had puppies she became, if not exactly intelligent, yet almost like many other dogs who had not been thoroughly broken.

"As soon as I foresaw the possibility of this, the wish to get Bertha married grew in me, not so much out of friendship for her and her poor parents as from scientific curiosity. What would happen? It was a singular problem. I said in reply to her father:

"Perhaps you are right. You might make the attempt, but you will never find a man to consent to marry her."

"I have found somebody," he said, in a low voice.

"I was dumfounded, and said: 'Somebody really suitable? Some one of your own rank and position in society?'

"'Decidedly,' he replied.

"'Oh! And may I ask his name?'

"I came on purpose to tell you, and to consult you. It is Monsieur Gaston du Boys de Lucelles."

"I felt inclined to exclaim: 'The wretch!' but I held my tongue, and after a few moments' silence I said:

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"Oh! Very good. I see nothing against it."

"The poor man shook me heartily by the hand.

"She is to be married next month," he said.

"Monsieur Gaston du Boys de Lucelles was a scapegrace of good family, who, after having spent all that he had inherited from his father, and having incurred debts in all kinds of doubtful ways, had been trying to discover some other means of obtaining money, and he had discovered this method. He was a good-looking young fellow, and in capital health, but fast; one of that odious race of provincial fast men, and he appeared to me to be as suitable as anyone, and could be got rid of later by making him an allowance. He came to the house to pay his addresses and to strut about before the idiot girl, who, however, seemed to please him. He brought her flowers, kissed her hands, sat at her feet, and looked at her with affectionate eyes; but she took no notice of any of his attentions, and did not make any distinction between him and the other persons who were about her.

"However, the marriage took placee, and you may guess how my curiosity was aroused. I went to see Bertha the next day to try and discover from her looks whether any feelings had been awakened in her, but I found her just the same as she was every day, wholly taken up with the clock and dinner, while he, on the contrary, appeared really in love, and tried to rouse his wife's spirits and affection by little endearments and such caresses as one bestows on a kitten. He could think of nothing better.

"I called upon the married couple pretty fre-

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quently, and I soon perceived that the young woman knew her husband, and gave him those eager looks which she had hitherto only bestowed on sweet dishes.

"She followed his movements, knew his step on the stairs or in the neighboring rooms, clapped her hands when he came in, and her face was changed and brightened by the flames of profound happiness and of desire.

"She loved him with her whole body and with all her soul to the very depths of her poor, weak soul, and with all her heart, that poor heart of some grateful animal. It was really a delightful and innocent picture of simple passion, of carnal and yet modest passion, such as nature had implanted in mankind, before man had complicated and disfigured it by all the various shades of sentiment. But he soon grew tired of this ardent, beautiful, dumb creature, and did not spend more than an hour during the day with her, thinking it sufficient if he came home at night, and she began to suffer in consequence. She used to wait for him from morning till night with her eyes on the clock; she did not even look after the meals now, for he took all his away from home, Clermont, Chatel-Guyon, Royat, no matter where, as long as he was not obliged to come home.

"She began to grow thin; every other thought, every other wish, every other expectation, and every confused hope disappeared from her mind, and the hours during which she did not see him became hours of terrible suffering to her. Soon he ceased to come home regularly of nights; he spent them with women at the casino at Royat and did not come

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home until daybreak. But she never went to bed before he returned. She remained sitting motionless in an easy-chair, with her eyes fixed on the hands of the clock, which turned so slowly and regularly round the china face on which the hours were painted.

"She heard the trot of his horse in the distance and sat up with a start, and when he came into the room she got up with the movements of an automaton and pointed to the clock, as if to say: 'Look how late it is!'

"And he began to be afraid of this amorous and jealous, half-witted woman, and flew into a rage, as brutes do; and one night he even went so far as to strike her, so they sent for me. When I arrived she was writhing and screaming in a terrible crisis of pain, anger, passion, how do I know what? Can one tell what goes on in such undeveloped brains?

"I calmed her by subcutaneous injections of morphine, and forbade her to see that man again, for I saw clearly that marriage would infallibly kill her by degrees.

"Then she went mad! Yes, my dear friend, that idiot went mad. She is always thinking of him and waiting for him; she waits for him all day and night, awake or asleep, at this very moment, ceaselessly. When I saw her getting thinner and thinner, and as she persisted in never taking her eyes off the clocks, I had them removed from the house. I thus made it impossible for her to count the hours, and to try to remember, from her indistinct reminiscences, at what time he used to come home formerly. I hope to destroy the recollection of it in time, and

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to extinguish that ray of thought which I kindled with so much difficulty.

"The other day I tried an experiment. I offered her my watch; she took it and looked at it for some time; then she began to scream terribly, as if the sight of that little object had suddenly awakened her memory, which was beginning to grow indistinct. She is pitifully thin now, with hollow and glittering eyes, and she walks up and down ceaselessly, like a wild beast in its cage; I have had gratings put on the windows, boarded them up half way, and have had the seats fixed to the floor so as to prevent her from looking to see whether he is coming.

"Oh! her poor parents! What a life they must lead!"

We had got to the top of the hill, and the doctor turned round and said to me:

"Look at Riom from here."

The gloomy town looked like some ancient city. Behind it a green, wooded plain studded with towns and villages, and bathed in a soft blue haze, extended until it was lost in the distance. Far away, on my right, there was a range of lofty mountains with round summits, or else cut off flat, as if with a sword, and the doctor began to enumerate the villages, towns and hills, and to give me the history of all of them. But I did not listen to him; I was thinking of nothing but the madwoman, and I only saw her. She seemed to be hovering over that vast extent of country like a mournful ghost, and I asked him abruptly:

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"What has become of the husband?"

My friend seemed rather surprised, but after a few moments' hesitation, he replied:

"He is living at Royat, on an allowance that they made him, and is quite happy; he leads a very fast life."

As we were slowly going back, both of us silent and rather low-spirited, an English dogcart, drawn by a thoroughbred horse, came up behind us and passed us rapidly. The doctor took me by the arm.

"There he is," he said.

I saw nothing except a gray felt hat, cocked over one ear above a pair of broad shoulders, driving off in a cloud of dust.

## THE MODEL

CURVING like a crescent moon, the little town of Étretat, with its white cliffs, its white, shingly beach and its blue sea, lay in the sunlight at high noon one July day. At either extremity of this crescent its two "gates," the smaller to the right, the larger one at the left, stretched forth—one a dwarf and the other a colossal limb—into the water, and the bell tower, almost as tall as the cliff, wide below, narrowing at the top, raised its pointed summit to the sky.

On the sands beside the water a crowd was seated watching the bathers. On the terrace of the Casino another crowd, seated or walking, displayed beneath the brilliant sky a perfect flower patch of bright costumes, with red and blue parasols embroidered with large flowers in silk.

On the walk at the end of the terrace, other persons, the restful, quiet ones, were walking slowly, far from the dressy throng.

A young man, well known and celebrated as a painter, Jean Sumner, was walking with a dejected air beside a wheeled chair in which sat a young woman, his wife. A man-servant was gently pushing the chair, and the crippled woman was gazing sadly at the brightness of the sky, the gladness of the day, and the happiness of others.

They did not speak. They did not look at each other.

## THE MODEL

"Let us stop a while," said the young woman.

They stopped, and the painter sat down on a camp stool that the servant handed him.

Those who were passing behind the silent and motionless couple looked at them compassionately. A whole legend of devotion was attached to them. He had married her in spite of her infirmity, touched by her affection for him, it was said.

Not far from there, two young men were chatting, seated on a bench and looking out into the horizon.

"No, it is not true; I tell you that I am well acquainted with Jean Sumner."

"But then, why did he marry her? For she was a cripple when she married, was she not?"

"Just so. He married her—he married her—just as every one marries, parbleu! because he was an idiot!"

"But why?"

"But why—but why, my friend? There is no why. People do stupid things just because they do stupid things. And, besides, you know very well that painters make a specialty of foolish marriages. They almost always marry models, former sweethearts, in fact, women of doubtful reputation, frequently. Why do they do this? Who can say? One would suppose that constant association with the general run of models would disgust them forever with that class of women. Not at all. After having posed them they marry them. Read that little book, so true, so cruel and so beautiful, by Alphonse Daudet: 'Artists' Wives.'

"In the case of the couple you see over there the accident occurred in a special and terrible manner.

## THE MODEL

The little woman played a frightful comedy, or, rather, tragedy. She risked all to win all. Was she sincere? Did she love Jean? Shall we ever know? Who is able to determine precisely how much is put on and how much is real in the actions of a woman? They are always sincere in an eternal mobility of impressions. They are furious, criminal, devoted, admirable and base in obedience to intangible emotions. They tell lies incessantly without intention, without knowing or understanding why, and in spite of it all are absolutely frank in their feelings and sentiments, which they display by violent, unexpected, incomprehensible, foolish resolutions which overthrow our arguments, our customary poise and all our selfish plans. The unforeseenness and suddenness of their determinations will always render them undecipherable enigmas as far as we are concerned. We continually ask ourselves: 'Are they sincere? Are they pretending?'

"But, my friend, they are sincere and insincere at one and the same time, because it is their nature to be extremists in both and to be neither one nor the other.

"See the methods that even the best of them employ to get what they desire. They are complex and simple, these methods. So complex that we can never guess at them beforehand, and so simple that after having been victimized we cannot help being astonished and exclaiming: 'What! Did she make a fool of me so easily as that?'

"And they always succeed, old man, especially when it is a question of getting married.

"But this is Sumner's story:

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"The little woman was a model, of course. She posed for him. She was pretty, very stylish-looking, and had a divine figure, it seems. He fancied that he loved her with his whole soul. That is another strange thing. As soon as one likes a woman one sincerely believes that they could not get along without her for the rest of their life. One knows that one has felt the same way before and that disgust invariably succeeded gratification; that in order to pass one's existence side by side with another there must be not a brutal, physical passion which soon dies out, but a sympathy of soul, temperament and temper. One should know how to determine in the enchantment to which one is subjected whether it proceeds from the physical, from a certain sensuous intoxication, or from a deep spiritual charm.

"Well, he believed himself in love; he made her no end of promises of fidelity, and was devoted to her.

"She was really attractive, gifted with that fashionable flippancy that little Parisians so readily affect. She chattered, babbled, made foolish remarks that sounded witty from the manner in which they were uttered. She used graceful gestures which were calculated to attract a painter's eye. When she raised her arms, when she bent over, when she got into a carriage, when she held out her hand to you, her gestures were perfect and appropriate.

"For three months Jean never noticed that, in reality, she was like all other models.

"He rented a little house for her for the summer at Andrésy.

"I was there one evening when for the first time doubts came into my friend's mind.

## THE MODEL

"As it was a beautiful evening we thought we would take a stroll along the bank of the river. The moon poured a flood of light on the trembling water, scattering yellow gleams along its ripples in the currents and all along the course of the wide, slow river.

"We strolled along the bank, a little enthused by that vague exaltation that these dreamy evenings produce in us. We would have liked to undertake some wonderful task, to love some unknown, deliciously poetic being. We felt ourselves vibrating with raptures, longings, strange aspirations. And we were silent, our beings pervaded by the serene and living coolness of the beautiful night, the coolness of the moonlight, which seemed to penetrate one's body, permeate it, soothe one's spirit, fill it with fragrance and steep it in happiness.

"Suddenly Joséphine (that is her name) uttered an exclamation:

"'Oh, did you see the big fish that jumped, over there?'

"He replied without looking, without thinking:

"'Yes, dear.'

"She was angry.

"'No, you did not see it, for your back was turned.'

"He smiled.

"'Yes, that's true. It is so delightful that I am not thinking of anything.'

"She was silent, but at the end of a minute she felt as if she must say something and asked:

"'Are you going to Paris to-morrow?'

"'I do not know,' he replied.

"She was annoyed again.

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"Do you think it is very amusing to walk along without speaking? People talk when they are not stupid."

"He did not reply. Then, feeling with her woman's instinct that she was going to make him angry, she began to sing a popular air that had harassed our ears and our minds for two years:

"Je regardais en l'air."

"He murmured:

"Please keep quiet."

"She replied angrily:

"Why do you wish me to keep quiet?"

"You spoil the landscape for us!" he said.

"Then followed a scene, a hateful, idiotic scene, with unexpected reproaches, unsuitable recriminations, then tears. Nothing was left unsaid. They went back to the house. He had allowed her to talk without replying, enervated by the beauty of the scene and dumfounded by this storm of abuse.

"Three months later he strove wildly to free himself from those invincible and invisible bonds with which such a friendship chains our lives. She kept him under her influence, tyrannizing over him, making his life a burden to him. They quarreled continually, vituperating and finally fighting each other.

"He wanted to break with her at any cost. He sold all his canvases, borrowed money from his friends, realizing twenty thousand francs (he was not well known then), and left them for her one morning with a note of farewell.

"He came and took refuge with me.

"About three o'clock that afternoon there was a ring at the bell. I went to the door. A woman

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sprang toward me, pushed me aside, came in and went into my atelier. It was she!

"He had risen when he saw her coming.

"She threw the envelope containing the banknotes at his feet with a truly noble gesture and said in a quick tone:

"There's your money. I don't want it!"

"She was very pale, trembling and ready undoubtedly to commit any folly. As for him, I saw him grow pale also, pale with rage and exasperation, ready also perhaps to commit any violence.

"He asked:

"What do you want?"

"She replied:

"I do not choose to be treated like a common woman. You implored me to accept you. I asked you for nothing. Keep me with you!"

"He stamped his foot.

"No, that's a little too much! If you think you are going—"

"I had seized his arm.

"Keep still, Jean. Let me settle it."

"I went toward her and quietly, little by little, I began to reason with her, exhausting all the arguments that are used under similar circumstances. She listened to me, motionless, with a fixed gaze, obstinate and silent.

"Finally, not knowing what more to say, and seeing that there would be a scene, I thought of a last resort and said:

"He loves you still, my dear, but his family want him to marry some one, and you understand—"

"She gave a start and exclaimed:

"Ah! Ah! Now I understand."

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"And turning toward him, she said:

"'You are—you are going to get married?'

"He replied decidedly:

"'Yes.'

"She took a step forward.

"'If you marry, I will kill myself! Do you hear?'

"He shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"'Well, then kill yourself!'

"She stammered out, almost choking with her violent emotion:

"'What do you say? What do you say? What do you say? Say it again!'

"He repeated:

"'Well, then kill yourself if you like!'

"With her face almost livid, she replied:

"'Do not dare me! I will throw myself from the window!'

"He began to laugh, walked toward the window, opened it, and bowing with the gesture of one who desires to let some one else precede him, he said:

"'This is the way. After you!'

"She looked at him for a second with terrible, wild, staring eyes. Then, taking a run as if she were going to jump a hedge in the country, she rushed past me and past him, jumped over the sill and disappeared.

"I shall never forget the impression made on me by that open window after I had seen that body pass through it to fall to the ground. It appeared to me in a second to be as large as the heavens and as hollow as space. And I drew back instinctively, not daring to look at it, as though I feared I might fall out myself.

"Jean, dumfounded, stood motionless.

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"They brought the poor girl in with both legs broken. She will never walk again.

"Jean, wild with remorse and also possibly touched with gratitude, made up his mind to marry her.

"There you have it, old man."

It was growing dusk. The young woman felt chilly and wanted to go home, and the servant wheeled the invalid chair in the direction of the village. The painter walked beside his wife, neither of them having exchanged a word for an hour.

This story appeared in *Le Gaulois*, December 17, 1883.

## “THE TERROR”

YOU say you cannot possibly understand it, and I believe you. You think I am losing my mind? Perhaps I am, but for other reasons than those you imagine, my dear friend.

Yes, I am going to be married, and will tell you what has led me to take that step.

I may add that I know very little of the girl who is going to become my wife to-morrow; I have only seen her four or five times. I know that there is nothing unpleasing about her, and that is enough for my purpose. She is small, fair, and stout; so, of course, the day after to-morrow I shall ardently wish for a tall, dark, thin woman.

She is not rich, and belongs to the middle classes. She is a girl such as you may find by the gross, well adapted for matrimony, without any apparent faults, and with no particularly striking qualities. People say of her:

“Mlle. Lajolle is a very nice girl,” and to-morrow they will say: “What a very nice woman Madame Raymon is.” She belongs, in a word, to that immense number of girls whom one is glad to have for one’s wife, till the moment comes when one discovers that one happens to prefer all other women to that particular woman whom one has married.

“Well,” you will say to me, “what on earth did you get married for?”

## “THE TERROR”

I hardly like to tell you the strange and seemingly improbable reason that urged me on to this senseless act; the fact, however, is that I am afraid of being alone.

I don't know how to tell you or to make you understand me, but my state of mind is so wretched that you will pity me and despise me.

I do not want to be alone any longer at night. I want to feel that there is some one close to me, touching me, a being who can speak and say something, no matter what it be.

I wish to be able to awaken somebody by my side, so that I may be able to ask some sudden question, a stupid question even, if I feel inclined, so that I may hear a human voice, and feel that there is some waking soul close to me, some one whose reason is at work; so that when I hastily light the candle I may see some human face by my side—because—because—I am ashamed to confess it—because I am afraid of being alone.

Oh, you don't understand me yet.

I am not afraid of any danger; if a man were to come into the room, I should kill him without trembling. I am not afraid of ghosts, nor do I believe in the supernatural. I am not afraid of dead people, for I believe in the total annihilation of every being that disappears from the face of this earth.

Well—yes, well, it must be told: I am afraid of myself, afraid of that horrible sensation of incomprehensible fear.

You may laugh, if you like. It is terrible, and I cannot get over it. I am afraid of the walls, of the furniture, of the familiar objects; which are animated, as far as I am concerned, by a kind of ani-

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mal life. Above all, I am afraid of my own dreadful thoughts, of my reason, which seems as if it were about to leave me, driven away by a mysterious and invisible agony.

At first I feel a vague uneasiness in my mind, which causes a cold shiver to run all over me. I look round, and of course nothing is to be seen, and I wish that there were something there, no matter what, as long as it were something tangible. I am frightened merely because I cannot understand my own terror.

If I speak, I am afraid of my own voice. If I walk, I am afraid of I know not what, behind the door, behind the curtains, in the cupboard, or under my bed, and yet all the time I know there is nothing anywhere, and I turn round suddenly because I am afraid of what is behind me, although there is nothing there, and I know it.

I become agitated. I feel that my fear increases, and so I shut myself up in my own room, get into bed, and hide under the clothes; and there, cowering down, rolled into a ball, I close my eyes in despair, and remain thus for an indefinite time, remembering that my candle is alight on the table by my bedside, and that I ought to put it out, and yet—I dare not do it!

It is very terrible, is it not, to be like that?

Formerly I felt nothing of all that. I came home quite calm, and went up and down my apartment without anything disturbing my peace of mind. Had any one told me that I should be attacked by a malady—for I can call it nothing else—of most improbable fear, such a stupid and terrible malady as it is, I should have laughed outright. I was certainly

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never afraid of opening the door in the dark. I went to bed slowly, without locking it, and never got up in the middle of the night to make sure that everything was firmly closed.

It began last year in a very strange manner on a damp autumn evening. When my servant had left the room, after I had dined, I asked myself what I was going to do. I walked up and down my room for some time, feeling tired without any reason for it, unable to work, and even without energy to read. A fine rain was falling, and I felt unhappy, a prey to one of those fits of despondency, without any apparent cause, which make us feel inclined to cry, or to talk, no matter to whom, so as to shake off our depressing thoughts.

I felt that I was alone, and my rooms seemed to me to be more empty than they had ever been before. I was in the midst of infinite and overwhelming solitude. What was I to do? I sat down, but a kind of nervous impatience seemed to affect my legs, so I got up and began to walk about again. I was, perhaps, rather feverish, for my hands, which I had clasped behind me, as one often does when walking slowly, almost seemed to burn one another. Then suddenly a cold shiver ran down my back, and I thought the damp air might have penetrated into my rooms, so I lit the fire for the first time that year, and sat down again and looked at the flames. But soon I felt that I could not possibly remain quiet, and so I got up again and determined to go out, to pull myself together, and to find a friend to bear me company.

I could not find any one, so I walked to the

## "THE TERROR"

boulevard to try and meet some acquaintance or other there.

It was wretched everywhere, and the wet pavement glistened in the gaslight, while the oppressive warmth of the almost impalpable rain lay heavily over the streets and seemed to obscure the light of the lamps.

I went on slowly, saying to myself: "I shall not find a soul to talk to."

I glanced into several cafés, from the Madeleine as far as the Faubourg Poissonnière, and saw many unhappy-looking individuals sitting at the tables, who did not seem even to have enough energy left to finish the refreshments they had ordered.

For a long time I wandered aimlessly up and down, and about midnight I started for home. I was very calm and very tired. My janitor opened the door at once, which was quite unusual for him, and I thought that another lodger had probably just come in.

When I go out I always double-lock the door of my room, and I found it merely closed, which surprised me; but I supposed that some letters had been brought up for me in the course of the evening.

I went in, and found my fire still burning so that it lighted up the room a little, and, while in the act of taking up a candle, I noticed somebody sitting in my armchair by the fire, warming his feet, with his back toward me.

I was not in the slightest degree frightened. I thought, very naturally, that some friend or other had come to see me. No doubt the porter, to whom I had said I was going out, had lent him his own key. In a moment I remembered all the circum-

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stances of my return, how the street door had been opened immediately, and that my own door was only latched and not locked.

I could see nothing of my friend but his head, and he had evidently gone to sleep while waiting for me, so I went up to him to rouse him. I saw him quite distinctly; his right arm was hanging down and his legs were crossed; the position of his head, which was somewhat inclined to the left of the armchair, seemed to indicate that he was asleep. “Who can it be?” I asked myself. I could not see clearly, as the room was rather dark, so I put out my hand to touch him on the shoulder, and it came in contact with the back of the chair. There was nobody there; the seat was empty.

I fairly jumped with fright. For a moment I drew back as if confronted by some terrible danger; then I turned round again, impelled by an imperious standing upright, panting with fear, so upset that I could not collect my thoughts, and ready to faint.

But I am a cool man, and soon recovered myself. I thought: “It is a mere hallucination, that is all,” and I immediately began to reflect on this phenomenon. Thoughts fly quickly at such moments.

I had been suffering from an hallucination, that was an incontestable fact. My mind had been perfectly lucid and had acted regularly and logically, so there was nothing the matter with the brain. It was only my eyes that had been deceived; they had had a vision, one of those visions which lead simple folk to believe in miracles. It was a nervous seizure of the optical apparatus, nothing more; the eyes were rather congested, perhaps.

I lit my candle, and when I stooped down to the

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fire in doing so I noticed that I was trembling, and I raised myself up with a jump, as if somebody had touched me from behind.

I was certainly not by any means calm.

I walked up and down a little, and hummed a tune or two. Then I double-locked the door and felt rather reassured; now, at any rate, nobody could come in.

I sat down again and thought over my adventure for a long time; then I went to bed and blew out my light.

For some minutes all went well; I lay quietly on my back, but presently an irresistible desire seized me to look round the room, and I turned over on my side.

My fire was nearly out, and the few glowing embers threw a faint light on the floor by the chair, where I fancied I saw the man sitting again.

I quickly struck a match, but I had been mistaken; there was nothing there. I got up, however, and hid the chair behind my bed, and tried to get to sleep, as the room was now dark; but I had not forgotten myself for more than five minutes, when in my dream I saw all the scene which I had previously witnessed as clearly as if it were reality. I woke up with a start, and having lit the candle, sat up in bed, without venturing even to try to go to sleep again.

Twice, however, sleep overcame me for a few moments in spite of myself, and twice I saw the same thing again, till I fancied I was going mad. When day broke, however, I thought that I was cured, and slept peacefully till noon.

It was all past and over. I had been feverish,

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had had the nightmare. I know not what. I had been ill, in fact, but yet thought I was a great fool.

I enjoyed myself thoroughly that evening. I dined at a restaurant and afterward went to the theatre, and then started for home. But as I got near the house I was once more seized by a strange feeling of uneasiness. I was afraid of seeing him again. I was not afraid of him, not afraid of his presence, in which I did not believe; but I was afraid of being deceived again. I was afraid of some fresh hallucination, afraid lest fear should take possession of me.

For more than an hour I wandered up and down the pavement; then, feeling that I was really too foolish, I returned home. I breathed so hard that I could hardly get upstairs, and remained standing outside my door for more than ten minutes; then suddenly I had a courageous impulse and my will asserted itself. I inserted my key into the lock, and went into the apartment with a candle in my hand. I kicked open my bedroom door, which was partly open, and cast a frightened glance toward the fireplace. There was nothing there. A-h! . . .

What a relief and what a delight! What a deliverance! I walked up and down briskly and boldly, but I was not altogether reassured, and kept turning round with a jump; the very shadows in the corners disquieted me.

I slept badly, and was constantly disturbed by imaginary noises, but did not see him; no, that was all over.

Since that time I have been afraid of being alone at night. I feel that the spectre is there, close to me, around me; but it has not appeared to me again.

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And supposing it did, what would it matter, since I do not believe in it, and know that it is nothing?

However, it still worries me, because I am constantly thinking of it. *His right arm hanging down and his head inclined to the left like a man who was asleep*— I don't want to think about it!

Why, however, am I so persistently possessed with this idea? His feet were close to the fire!

He haunts me; it is very stupid, but who and what is he? I know that he does not exist except in my cowardly imagination, in my fears, and in my agony. There—enough of that!

Yes, it is all very well for me to reason with myself, *to stiffen my backbone*, so to say; but I cannot remain at home because I know he is there. I know I shall not see him again; he will not show himself again; that is all over. But he is there, all the same, in my thoughts. He remains invisible, but that does not prevent his being there. He is behind the doors, in the closed cupboard, in the wardrobe, under the bed, in every dark corner. If I open the door or the cupboard, if I take the candle to look under the bed and throw a light on the dark places, he is there no longer, but I feel that he is behind me. I turn round, certain that I shall not see him, that I shall never see him again; but for all that, he is behind me.

It is very stupid, it is dreadful; but what am I to do? I cannot help it.

But if there were two of us in the place I feel certain that he would not be there any longer, for he is there just because I am alone, simply and solely because I am alone!

## A NEW YEAR'S GIFT

JACQUES DE RANDAL, having dined at home alone, told his valet he might go out, and he sat down at his table to write some letters.

He ended every year in this manner, writing and dreaming. He reviewed the events of his life since last New Year's Day, things that were now all over and dead; and, in proportion as the faces of his friends rose up before his eyes, he wrote them a few lines, a cordial New Year's greeting on the first of January.

So he sat down, opened a drawer, took out of it a woman's photograph, gazed at it a few moments, and kissed it. Then, having laid it beside a sheet of notepaper, he began:

MY DEAR IRENE: You must by this time have received the little souvenir I sent you addressed to the maid. I have shut myself up this evening in order to tell you—"

The pen here ceased to move. Jacques rose up and began walking up and down the room.

For the last ten months he had had a sweetheart, not like the others, a woman with whom one engages in a passing intrigue, of the theatrical world or the *demi-monde*, but a woman whom he loved and won. He was no longer a young man, although he was still comparatively young for a man, and he

## A NEW YEAR'S GIFT

looked on life seriously in a positive and practical spirit.

Accordingly, he drew up the balance sheet of his passion, as he drew up every year the balance sheet of friendships that were ended or freshly contracted, of circumstances and persons that had entered into his life.

His first ardor of love having grown calmer, he asked himself with the precision of a merchant making a calculation what was the state of his heart with regard to her, and he tried to form an idea of what it would be in the future.

He found there a great and deep affection, made up of tenderness, gratitude and the thousand subtle ties which give birth to long and powerful attachments.

A ring at the bell made him start. He hesitated. Should he open the door? But he said to himself that one must always open the door on New Year's night, to admit the unknown who is passing by and knocks, no matter who it may be.

So he took a wax candle, passed through the antechamber, drew back the bolts, turned the key, pulled the door back, and saw his sweetheart standing pale as a corpse, leaning against the wall.

He stammered:

"What is the matter with you?"

She replied:

"Are you alone?"

"Yes."

"Without servants?"

"Yes."

"You are not going out?"

"No."

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She entered with the air of a woman who knew the house. As soon as she was in the drawing-room, she sank down on the sofa, and, covering her face with her hands, began to weep bitterly.

He knelt down at her feet, and tried to remove her hands from her eyes, so that he might look at them, and exclaimed:

"Irene, Irene, what is the matter with you? I implore you to tell me what is the matter with you?"

Then, amid her sobs, she murmured:

"I can no longer live like this."

"Live like this? What do you mean?"

"Yes. I can no longer live like this. I have endured so much. He struck me this afternoon."

"Who? Your husband?"

"Yes, my husband."

"Ah!"

He was astonished, having never suspected that her husband could be brutal. He was a man of the world, of the better class, a clubman, a lover of horses, a theatergoer and an expert swordsman; he was known, talked about, appreciated everywhere, having very courteous manners, a very mediocre intellect, an absence of education and of the real culture needed in order to think like all well-bred people, and finally a respect for conventionalities.

He appeared to devote himself to his wife, as a man ought to do in the case of wealthy and well-bred people. He displayed enough of anxiety about her wishes, her health, her dresses, and, beyond that, left her perfectly free.

Randal, having become Irene's friend, had a

## A NEW YEAR'S GIFT

right to the affectionate hand-clasp which every husband endowed with good manners owes to his wife's intimate acquaintance. Then, when Jacques, after having been for some time the friend, became the lover, his relations with the husband were more cordial, as is fitting.

Jacques had never dreamed that there were storms in this household, and he was bewildered at this unexpected revelation.

He asked:

"How did it happen? Tell me."

Thereupon she related a long story, the entire history of her life since the day of her marriage, the first disagreement arising out of a mere nothing, then becoming accentuated at every new difference of opinion between two dissimilar dispositions.

Then came quarrels, a complete separation, not apparent, but real; next, her husband showed himself aggressive, suspicious, violent. Now, he was jealous, jealous of Jacques, and that very day, after a scene, he had struck her.

She added with decision: "I will not go back to him. Do with me what you like."

Jacques sat down opposite to her, their knees touching. He took her hands:

"My dear love, you are going to commit a gross, an irreparable folly. If you want to leave your husband, put him in the wrong, so that your position as a woman of the world may be saved."

She asked, as she looked at him uneasily:

"Then, what do you advise me?"

"To go back home and to put up with your life there till the day when you can obtain either a separation or a divorce, with the honors of war."

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"Is not this thing which you advise me to do a little cowardly?"

"No; it is wise and sensible. You have a high position, a reputation to protect, friends to preserve and relations to deal with. You must not lose all these through a mere caprice."

She rose up, and said with violence:

"Well, no! I cannot stand it any longer! It is at an end! it is at an end!"

Then, placing her two hands on her lover's shoulders, and looking him straight in the face, she asked:

"Do you love me?"

"Yes."

"Really and truly?"

"Yes."

"Then take care of me."

He exclaimed:

"Take care of you? In my own house? Here? Why, you are mad. It would mean losing you forever; losing you beyond hope of recall! You are mad!"

She replied, slowly and seriously, like a woman who feels the weight of her words:

"Listen, Jacques. He has forbidden me to see you again, and I will not play this comedy of coming secretly to your house. You must either lose me or take me."

"My dear Irene, in that case, obtain your divorce, and I will marry you."

"Yes, you will marry me in—two years at the soonest. Yours is a patient love."

"Look here! Reflect! If you remain here he'll come to-morrow to take you away, seeing that he is

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.your husband, seeing that he has right and law on his side."

"I did not ask you to keep me in your own house, Jacques, but to take me anywhere you like. I thought you loved me enough to do that. I have made a mistake. Good-by!"

She turned round and went toward the door so quickly that he was only able to catch hold of her when she was outside the room:

"Listen, Irene."

She struggled, and would not listen to him. Her eyes were full of tears, and she stammered:

"Let me alone! let me alone! let me alone!"

He made her sit down by force, and once more falling on his knees at her feet, he now brought forward a number of arguments and counsels to make her understand the folly and terrible risk of her project. He omitted nothing which he deemed necessary to convince her, finding even in his very affection for her incentives to persuasion.

As she remained silent and cold as ice, he begged of her, implored of her to listen to him, to trust him, to follow his advice.

When he had finished speaking, she only replied:

"Are you disposed to let me go away now?  
Take away your hands, so that I may rise to my feet."

"Look here, Irene."

"Will you let me go?"

"Irene—is your resolution irrevocable?"

"Will you let me go."

"Tell me only whether this resolution, this mad resolution of yours, which you will bitterly regret, is irrevocable?"

## A NEW YEAR'S GIFT

"Yes—let me go!"

"Then stay. You know well that you are at home here. We shall go away to-morrow morning."

She rose to her feet in spite of him, and said in a hard tone:

"No. It is too late. I do not want sacrifice; I do not want devotion."

"Stay! I have done what I ought to do; I have said what I ought to say. I have no further responsibility on your behalf. My conscience is at peace. Tell me what you want me to do, and I will obey."

She resumed her seat, looked at him for a long time, and then asked, in a very calm voice:

"Well, then, explain."

"Explain what? What do you wish me to explain?"

"Everything—everything that you thought about before changing your mind. Then I will see what I ought to do."

"But I thought about nothing at all. I had to warn you that you were going to commit an act of folly. You persist; then I ask to share in this act of folly, and I even insist on it."

"It is not natural to change one's mind so quickly."

"Listen, my dear love. It is not a question here of sacrifice or devotion. On the day when I realized that I loved you, I said to myself what every lover ought to say to himself in the same case: 'The man who loves a woman, who makes an effort to win her, who gets her, and who takes her, enters into a sacred contract with himself and with her. That is, of course, in dealing with a woman like

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you, not a woman with a fickle heart and easily impressed.'

'Marriage which has a great social value, a great legal value, possesses in my eyes only a very slight moral value, taking into account the conditions under which it generally takes place.

"Therefore, when a woman, united by this lawful bond, but having no attachment to her husband, whom she cannot love, a woman whose heart is free, meets a man whom she cares for, and gives herself to him, when a man who has no other tie, takes a woman in this way, I say that they pledge themselves toward each other by this mutual and free agreement much more than by the 'Yes' uttered in the presence of the mayor.

"I say that, if they are both honorable persons, their union must be more intimate, more real, more wholesome, than if all the sacraments had consecrated it.

"This woman risks everything. And it is exactly because she knows it, because she gives everything, her heart, her body, her soul, her honor, her life, because she has foreseen all miseries, all dangers, all catastrophes, because she dares to do a bold act, an intrepid act, because she is prepared, determined to brave everything—her husband, who might kill her, and society, which may cast her out. This is why she is worthy of respect in the midst of her conjugal infidelity; this is why her lover, in taking her, should also foresee everything, and prefer her to every one else whatever may happen. I have nothing more to say. I spoke in the beginning like a sensible man whose duty it was to warn

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you; and now I am only a man—a man who loves you. Command, and I obey."

Radiant, she closed his mouth with a kiss, and said in a low tone:

"It is not true, darling! There is nothing the matter! My husband does not suspect anything. But I wanted to see, I wanted to know, what you would do. I wished for a New Year's gift—the gift of your heart—another gift besides the necklace you sent me. You have given it to me. Thanks! thanks! God be thanked for the happiness you have given me!"

## REGRET

MONSIEUR SAVAL, who was called in Mantes "Father Saval," had just risen from bed. He was weeping. It was a dull autumn day; the leaves were falling. They fell slowly in the rain, like a heavier and slower rain. M. Saval was not in good spirits. He walked from the fireplace to the window, and from the window to the fireplace. Life has its sombre days. It would no longer have any but sombre days for him, for he had reached the age of sixty-two. He is alone, an old bachelor, with nobody about him. How sad it is to die alone, all alone, without any one who is devoted to you!

He pondered over his life, so barren, so empty. He recalled former days, the days of his childhood, the home, the house of his parents; his college days, his follies, the time he studied law in Paris, his father's illness, his death. He then returned to live with his mother. They lived together very quietly, and desired nothing more. At last the mother died. How sad life is! He lived alone since then, and now, in his turn, he, too, will soon be dead. He will disappear, and that will be the end. There will be no more of Paul Saval upon the earth. What a frightful thing! Other people will love, will laugh. Yes, people will go on amusing themselves, and he will no longer exist! Is it not strange that people

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can laugh, amuse themselves, be joyful under that eternal certainty of death? If this death were only probable, one could then have hope; but no, it is inevitable, as inevitable as that night follows the day.

If, however, his life had been full! If he had done something; if he had had adventures, great pleasures, success, satisfaction of some kind or another. But no, nothing. He had done nothing, nothing but rise from bed, eat, at the same hours, and go to bed again. And he had gone on like that to the age of sixty-two years. He had not even taken unto himself a wife, as other men do. Why? Yes, why was it that he had not married? He might have done so, for he possessed considerable means. Had he lacked an opportunity? Perhaps! But one can create opportunities. He was indifferent; that was all. Indifference had been his greatest drawback, his defect, his vice. How many men wreck their lives through indifference! It is so difficult for some natures to get out of bed, to move about, to take long walks, to speak, to study any question.

He had not even been loved. No woman had reposed on his bosom, in a complete abandon of love. He knew nothing of the delicious anguish of expectation, the divine vibration of a hand in yours, of the ecstasy of triumphant passion.

What superhuman happiness must overflow your heart, when lips encounter lips for the first time, when the grasp of four arms makes one being of you, a being unutterably happy, two beings infatuated with one another.

M. Saval was sitting before the fire, his feet on the fender, in his dressing gown. Assuredly his life

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had been spoiled, completely spoiled. He had, however, loved. He had loved secretly, sadly, and indifferently, in a manner characteristic of him in everything. Yes, he had loved his old friend, Madame Sandres, the wife of his old companion, Sandres. Ah! if he had known her as a young girl! But he had met her too late; she was already married. Unquestionably, he would have asked her hand! How he had loved her, nevertheless, without respite, since the first day he set eyes on her!

He recalled his emotion every time he saw her, his grief on leaving her, the many nights that he could not sleep, because he was thinking of her.

On rising in the morning he was somewhat more rational than on the previous evening.

Why?

How pretty she was formerly, so dainty, with fair curly hair, and always laughing. Sandres was not the man she should have chosen. She was now fifty-two years of age. She seemed happy. Ah! if she had only loved him in days gone by; yes, if she had only loved him! And why should she not have loved him, he, Saval, seeing that he loved her so much, yes, she, Madame Sandres!

If only she could have guessed. Had she not guessed anything, seen anything, comprehended anything? What would she have thought? If he had spoken, what would she have answered?

And Saval asked himself a thousand other things. He reviewed his whole life, seeking to recall a multitude of details.

He recalled all the long evenings spent at the house of Sandres, when the latter's wife was young, and so charming.

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He recalled many things that she had said to him, the intonations of her voice, the little significant smiles that meant so much.

He recalled their walks, the three of them together, along the banks of the Seine, their luncheon on the grass on Sundays, for Sandres was employed at the sub-prefecture. And all at once the distinct recollection came to him of an afternoon spent with her in a little wood on the banks of the river.

They had set out in the morning, carrying their provisions in baskets. It was a bright spring morning, one of those days which intoxicate one. Everything smells fresh, everything seems happy. The voices of the birds sound more joyous, and they fly more swiftly. They had luncheon on the grass, under the willow trees, quite close to the water, which glittered in the sun's rays. The air was balmy, charged with the odors of fresh vegetation; they drank it in with delight. How pleasant everything was on that day!

After lunch, Sandres went to sleep on the broad of his back. "The best nap he had in his life," said he, when he woke up.

Madame Sandres had taken the arm of Saval, and they started to walk along the river bank.

She leaned tenderly on his arm. She laughed and said to him: "I am intoxicated, my friend, I am quite intoxicated." He looked at her, his heart going pit-a-pat. He felt himself grow pale, fearful that he might have looked too boldly at her, and that the trembling of his hand had revealed his passion.

She had made a wreath of wild flowers and water-

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lilies, and she asked him: "Do I look pretty like that?"

As he did not answer—for he could find nothing to say, he would have liked to go down on his knees—she burst out laughing, a sort of annoyed, displeased laugh, as she said: "Great goose, what ails you? You might at least say something."

He felt like crying, but could not even yet find a word to say.

All these things came back to him now, as vividly as on the day when they took place. Why had she said this to him, "Great goose, what ails you? You might at least say something!"

And he recalled how tenderly she had leaned on his arm. And in passing under a shady tree he had felt her ear brushing his cheek, and he had moved his head abruptly, lest she should suppose he was too familiar.

When he had said to her: "Is it not time to return?" she darted a singular look at him. "Certainly," she said, "certainly," regarding him at the same time in a curious manner. He had not thought of it at the time, but now the whole thing appeared to him quite plain.

"Just as you like, my friend. If you are tired let us go back."

And he had answered: "I am not fatigued; but Sandres may be awake now."

And she had said: "If you are afraid of my husband's being awake, that is another thing. Let us return."

On their way back she remained silent, and leaned no longer on his arm. Why?

At that time it had never occurred to him, to

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ask himself "why." Now he seemed to apprehend something that he had not then understood.

Could it? . . .

M. Saval felt himself blush, and he got up at a bound, as if he were thirty years younger and had heard Madame Sandres say, "I love you."

Was it possible? That idea which had just entered his mind tortured him. Was it possible that he had not seen, had not guessed?

Oh! if that were true, if he had let this opportunity of happiness pass without taking advantage of it!

He said to himself : "I must know. I cannot remain in this state of doubt. I must know!" He thought: "I am sixty-two years of age, she is fifty-eight; I may ask her that now without giving offense."

He started out.

The Sandres' house was situated on the other side of the street, almost directly opposite his own. He went across and knocked at the door, and a little servant opened it.

"You here at this hour, Saval! Has some accident happened to you?"

"No, my girl," he replied; "but go and tell your mistress that I want to speak to her at once."

"The fact is madame is preserving pears for the winter, and she is in the preserving room. She is not dressed, you understand."

"Yes, but go and tell her that I wish to see her on a very important matter."

The little servant went away, and Saval began to walk, with long, nervous strides, up and down the drawing-room. He did not feel in the least

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embarrassed, however. Oh! he was merely going to ask her something, as he would have asked her about some cooking recipe. He was sixty-two years of age!

The door opened and madame appeared. She was now a large woman, fat and round, with full cheeks and a sonorous laugh. She walked with her arms away from her sides and her sleeves tucked up, her bare arms all covered with fruit juice. She asked anxiously:

"What is the matter with you, my friend? You are not ill, are you?"

"No, my dear friend; but I wish to ask you one thing, which to me is of the first importance, something which is torturing my heart, and I want you to promise that you will answer me frankly."

She laughed, "I am always frank. Say on."

"Well, then. I have loved you from the first day I ever saw you. Can you have any doubt of this?"

She responded, laughing, with something of her former tone of voice.

"Great goose! what ails you? I knew it from the very first day!"

Saval began to tremble. He stammered out: "You knew it? Then . . . ."

He stopped.

She asked:

"Then? . . . . What?"

He answered:

"Then—what did you think? What—what—what would you have answered?"

She broke into a peal of laughter. Some of the juice ran off the tips of her fingers on to the carpet.

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"I? Why, you did not ask me anything. It was not for me to declare myself!"

He then advanced a step toward her.

"Tell me—tell me. . . . You remember the day when Sandres went to sleep on the grass after lunch . . . when we had walked together as far as the bend of the river, below . . ."

He waited, expectantly. She had ceased to laugh, and looked at him, straight in the eyes.

"Yes, certainly, I remember it."

He answered, trembling all over:

"Well—that day—if I had been—if I had been—venturesome—what would you have done?"

She began to laugh as only a happy woman can laugh, who has nothing to regret, and responded frankly, in a clear voice tinged with irony:

"I would have yielded, my friend."

She then turned on her heels and went back to her jam-making.

Saval rushed into the street, cast down, as though he had met with some disaster. He walked with giant strides through the rain, straight on, until he reached the river bank, without thinking where he was going. He then turned to the right and followed the river. He walked a long time, as if urged on by some instinct. His clothes were running with water, his hat was out of shape, as soft as a rag, and dripping like a roof. He walked on, straight in front of him. At last, he came to the place where they had lunched on that day so long ago, the recollection of which tortured his heart. He sat down under the leafless trees, and wept.

## THE DOOR

“A H!” exclaimed Karl Massouligny, “the question of complaisant husbands is a difficult one. I have seen many kinds, and yet I am unable to give an opinion about any of them. I have often tried to determine whether they are blind, weak or clairvoyant. I believe that there are some which belong to each of these categories.

“Let us quickly pass over the blind ones. They cannot rightly be called complaisant, since they do not know, but they are good creatures who cannot see farther than their nose. It is a curious and interesting thing to notice the ease with which men and women can be deceived. We are taken in by the slightest trick of those who surround us, by our children, our friends, our servants, our tradespeople. Humanity is credulous, and in order to discover deceit in others, we do not display one-tenth the shrewdness which we use when we, in turn, wish to deceive some one else.

“Clairvoyant husbands may be divided into three classes: Those who have some interest, pecuniary, ambitious or otherwise, in their wife’s having love affairs. These ask only to safeguard appearances as much as possible, and they are satisfied.

“Next come those who get angry. What a beautiful novel one could write about them!

“Finally the weak ones! Those who are afraid of scandal.

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"There are also those who are powerless, or, rather, tired, who flee from the duties of matrimony through fear of ataxia or apoplexy, who are satisfied to see a friend run these risks.

"But I once met a husband of a rare species, who guarded against the common accident in a strange and witty manner.

"In Paris I had made the acquaintance of an elegant, fashionable couple. The woman, nervous, tall, slender, courted, was supposed to have had many love adventures. She pleased me with her wit, and I believe that I pleased her also. I courted her, a trial courting to which she answered with evident provocations. Soon we got to tender glances, hand pressures, all the little gallantries which precede the final attack.

"Nevertheless, I hesitated. I consider that, as a rule, the majority of society intrigues, however short they may be, are not worth the trouble which they give us and the difficulties which may arise. I therefore mentally compared the advantages and disadvantages which I might expect, and I thought I noticed that the husband suspected me.

"One evening, at a ball, as I was saying tender things to the young woman in a little parlor leading from the big hall where the dancing was going on, I noticed in a mirror the reflection of some one who was watching me. It was he. Our looks met and then I saw him turn his head and walk away.

"I murmured: 'Your husband is spying on us.'

"She seemed dumbfounded and asked: 'My husband?'

"'Yes, he has been watching us for some time.'

"'Nonsense! Are you sure?'

## THE DOOR

“‘Very sure.’

“‘How strange! He is usually extraordinarily pleasant to all my friends.’

“‘Perhaps he guessed that I love you?’

“‘Nonsense! You are not the first one to pay attention to me. Every woman who is a little in view drags behind her a herd of admirers.’

“‘Yes. But I love you deeply.’

“‘Admitting that that is true, does a husband ever guess those things?’

“‘Then he is not jealous?’

“‘No—no!’

“She thought for an instant and then continued: ‘No. I do not think that I ever noticed any jealousy on his part.’

“‘Has he never—watched you?’

“‘No. As I said, he is always agreeable to my friends.’

“From that day my courting became much more assiduous. The woman did not please me any more than before, but the probable jealousy of her husband tempted me greatly.

“As for her, I judged her coolly and clearly. She had a certain worldly charm, due to a quick, gay, amiable and superficial mind, but no real, deep attraction. She was, as I have already said, an excitable little being, all on the surface, with rather a showy elegance. How can I explain myself? She was—an ornament, not a home.

“One day, after taking dinner with her, her husband said to me, just as I was leaving: ‘My dear friend’ (he now called me ‘friend’), ‘we soon leave for the country. It is a great pleasure to my wife and myself to entertain people whom we like. We

## THE DOOR

would be very pleased to have you spend a month with us. It would be very nice of you to do so.'

"I was dumbfounded, but I accepted.

"A month later I arrived at their estate of Vertcresson, in Touraine. They were waiting for me at the station, five miles from the château. There were three of them; she, the husband and a gentleman unknown to me, the Comte de Morterade, to whom I was introduced. He appeared to be delighted to make my acquaintance, and the strangest ideas passed through my mind while we trotted along the beautiful road between two hedges. I was saying to myself: 'Let's see, what can this mean? Here is a husband who cannot doubt that his wife and I are on more than friendly terms, and yet he invites me to his house, receives me like an old friend and seems to say: "Go ahead, my friend, the road is clear!"'

"Then I am introduced to a very pleasant gentleman, who seems already to have settled down in the house, and—and who is perhaps trying to get out of it, and who seems as pleased at my arrival as the husband himself.

"Is it some former admirer who wishes to retire? One might think so. But, then, would these two men tacitly have come to one of these infamous little agreements so common in society? And it is proposed to me that I should quietly enter into the pact and carry it out. All hands and arms are held out to me. All doors and hearts are open to me.

"And what about her? An enigma. She cannot be ignorant of everything. However—however—Well, I cannot understand it."

"The dinner was very gay and cordial. On leav-

## THE DOOR

ing the table the husband and his friend began to play cards, while I went out on the porch to look at the moonlight with madame. She seemed to be greatly affected by nature, and I judged that the moment for my happiness was near. That evening she was really delightful. The country had seemed to make her more tender. Her long, slender waist looked pretty on this stone porch beside a great vase in which grew some flowers. I felt like dragging her out under the trees, throwing myself at her feet and speaking to her words of love.

“Her husband’s voice called ‘Louise !’

“‘Yes, dear.’

“‘You are forgetting the tea.’

“‘I’ll go and see about it, my friend.’

“We returned to the house, and she gave us some tea. When the two men had finished playing cards, they were visibly tired. I had to go to my room. I did not get to sleep till late, and then I slept badly.

“An excursion was decided upon for the following afternoon, and we went in an open carriage to visit some ruins. She and I were in the back of the vehicle and they were opposite us, riding backward. The conversation was sympathetic and agreeable. I am an orphan, and it seemed to me as though I had just found my family, I felt so at home with them.

“Suddenly, as she had stretched out her foot between her husband’s legs, he murmured reproachfully: ‘Louise, please don’t wear out your old shoes yourself. There is no reason for being neater in Paris than in the country.’

“I lowered my eyes. She was indeed wearing

## THE DOOR

worn-out shoes, and I noticed that her stockings were not pulled up tight.

"She had blushed and hidden her foot under her dress. The friend was looking out in the distance with an indifferent and unconcerned look.

"The husband offered me a cigar, which I accepted. For a few days it was impossible for me to be alone with her for two minutes; he was with us everywhere. He was delightful to me, however.

"One morning he came to get me to take a walk before breakfast, and the conversation happened to turn on marriage. I spoke a little about solitude and about how charming life can be made by the affection of a woman. Suddenly he interrupted me, saying: 'My friend, don't talk about things you know nothing about. A woman who has no other reason for loving you will not love you long. All the little coquettishness which make them so exquisite when they do not definitely belong to us cease as soon as they become ours. And then—the respectable women—that is to say our wives—are—are not—in fact do not understand their profession of wife. Do you understand?'

"He said no more, and I could not guess his thoughts.

"Two days after this conversation he called me to his room quite early, in order to show me a collection of engravings. I sat in an easy chair opposite the big door which separated his apartment from his wife's, and behind this door I heard some one walking and moving, and I was thinking very little of the engravings, although I kept exclaiming: 'Oh, charming! delightful! exquisite!'

## THE DOOR

"He suddenly said: 'Oh, I have a beautiful specimen in the next room. I'll go and get it.'

"He ran to the door quickly, and both sides opened as though for a theatrical effect.

"In a large room, all in disorder, in the midst of skirts, collars, waists lying around on the floor, stood a tall, dried-up creature. The lower part of her body was covered with an old, worn-out silk petticoat, which was hanging limply on her shapeless form, and she was standing in front of a mirror brushing some short, sparse blond hairs. Her arms formed two acute angles, and as she turned around in astonishment I saw under a common cotton chemise a regular cemetery of ribs, which were hidden from the public gaze by well-arranged pads.

"The husband uttered a natural exclamation and came back, closing the doors, and said: 'Gracious! how stupid I am! Oh, how thoughtless! My wife will never forgive me for that!'

"I already felt like thanking him. I left three days later, after cordially shaking hands with the two men and kissing the lady's fingers. She bade me a cold good-by."

Karl Massouligny was silent. Some one asked: "But what was the friend?"

"I don't know—however—however he looked greatly distressed to see me leaving so soon."

## THE ENGLISHMAN OF ÉTRETAT

A GREAT English poet has just crossed over to France in order to greet Victor Hugo. All the newspapers are full of his name and he is the great topic of conversation in all drawing-rooms. Fifteen years ago I had occasion several times to meet Algernon Charles Swinburne. I will attempt to show him just as I saw him and to give an idea of the strange impression he made on me, which will remain with me throughout time.

I believe it was in 1867 or in 1868 that an unknown young Englishman came to Étretat and bought a little hut hidden under great trees. It was said that he lived there, always alone, in a strange manner; and he aroused the inimical surprise of the natives, for the inhabitants were sullen and foolishly malicious, as they always are in little towns.

They declared that this whimsical Englishman ate nothing but boiled, roasted or stewed monkey; that he would see no one; that he talked to himself hours at a time and many other surprising things that made people think that he was different from other men. They were surprised that he should live alone with a monkey. Had it been a cat or a dog they would have said nothing. But a monkey! Was that not frightful? What savage tastes the man must have!

## THE ENGLISHMAN OF ÉTRETAT

I knew this young man only from seeing him in the streets. He was short, plump without being fat, mild-looking, and he wore a little blond mustache, which was almost invisible.

Chance brought us together. This savage had amiable and pleasing manners, but he was one of those strange Englishmen that one meets here and there throughout the world.

Endowed with remarkable intelligence, he seemed to live in a fantastic dream, as Edgar Poe must have lived. He had translated into English a volume of strange Icelandic legends, which I ardently desired to see translated into French. He loved the supernatural, the dismal and grawsome, but he spoke of the most marvellous things with a calmness that was typically English, to which his gentle and quiet voice gave a semblance of reality that was maddening.

Full of a haughty disdain for the world, with its conventions, prejudices and code of morality, he had nailed to his house a name that was boldly impudent. The keeper of a lonely inn who should write on his door: "Travellers murdered here!" could not make a more sinister jest. I never had entered his dwelling, when one day I received an invitation to luncheon, following an accident that had occurred to one of his friends, who had been almost drowned and whom I had attempted to rescue.

Although I was unable to reach the man until he had already been rescued, I received the hearty thanks of the two Englishmen, and the following day I called upon them.

The friend was a man about thirty years old. He bore an enormous head on a child's body—a body

## THE ENGLISHMAN OF ÉTRETAT

without chest or shoulders. An immense forehead, which seemed to have engulfed the rest of the man, expanded like a dome above a thin face which ended in a little pointed beard. Two sharp eyes and a peculiar mouth gave one the impression of the head of a reptile, while the magnificent brow suggested a genius.

A nervous twitching shook this peculiar being, who walked, moved, acted by jerks like a broken spring.

This was Algernon Charles Swinburne, son of an English admiral and grandson, on the maternal side, of the Earl of Ashburnham.

He strange countenance was transfigured when he spoke. I have seldom seen a man more impressive, more eloquent, incisive or charming in conversation. His rapid, clear, piercing and fantastic imagination seemed to creep into his voice and to lend life to his words. His brusque gestures enlivened his speech, which penetrated one like a dagger, and he had bursts of thought, just as lighthouses throw out flashes of fire, great, genial lights that seemed to illuminate a whole world of ideas.

The home of the two friends was pretty and by no means commonplace. Everywhere were paintings, some superb, some strange, representing different conceptions of insanity. Unless I am mistaken, there was a water-color which represented the head of a dead man floating in a rose-colored shell on a boundless ocean, under a moon with a human face.

Here and there I came across bones. I clearly remember a flayed hand on which was hanging some

## THE ENGLISHMAN OF ÉTRETAT

dried skin and black muscles, and on the snow-white bones could be seen the traces of dried blood.

The food was a riddle which I could not solve. Was it good? Was it bad? I could not say. Some roast monkey took away all desire to make a steady diet of this animal, and the great monkey who roamed about among us at large and playfully pushed his head into my glass when I wished to drink cured me of any desire I might have to take one of his brothers as a companion for the rest of my days.

As for the two men, they gave me the impression of two strange, original, remarkable minds, belonging to that peculiar race of talented madmen from among whom have arisen Poe, Hoffmann and many others.

If genius is, as is commonly believed, a sort of aberration of great minds, then Algernon Charles Swinburne is undoubtedly a genius.

Great minds that are healthy are never considered geniuses, while this sublime qualification is lavished on brains that are often inferior but are slightly touched by madness.

At any rate, this poet remains one of the first of his time, through his originality and polished form. He is an exalted lyrical singer who seldom bothers about the good and humble truth, which French poets are now seeking so persistently and patiently. He strives to set down dreams, subtle thoughts, sometimes great, sometimes visibly forced, but sometimes magnificent.

Two years later I found the house closed and its tenants gone. The furniture was being sold. In

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memory of them I bought the hideous flayed hand. On the grass an enormous square block of granite bore this simple word: "Nip." Above this a hollow stone offered water to the birds. It was the grave of the monkey, who had been hanged by a young, vindictive negro servant. It was said that this violent domestic had been forced to flee at the point of his exasperated master's revolver. After wandering about without home or food for several days, he returned and began to peddle barley-sugar in the streets. He was expelled from the country after he had almost strangled a displeased customer.

The world would be gayer if one could often meet homes like that.

## THE ORIENT

AUTUMN is here! When I feel the first touch of winter I always think of my friend who lives down yonder on the Asiatic frontier.

The last time I went to see him I knew that I should not see him again. It was toward the end of September three years ago. I found him stretched out on his divan, dreaming under the influence of opium. Holding out his hand to me without moving, he said:

"Stay here. Talk and I will answer you, but I shall not move, for you know that when once the drug has been swallowed you must stay on your back."

I sat down and began to tell him a thousand things about Paris and the boulevards.

But he interrupted me.

"What you are saying does not interest me in the least, for I am thinking only of the countries under other skies. Oh, how that poor Gautier must have suffered, always haunted by the longing for the Orient! You don't know what that means, how that country takes hold of you, how it captivates you, penetrates you to your inmost being and will not let you go. It enters into you through the eye, through the skin, with all its invisible seductions, and it holds you by an invisible thread, which is unceasingly pulling you, in whatever spot on earth chance may have flung you. I take the drug in or-

## THE ORIENT

der to muse on that land in the delicious torpor of opium."

He stopped and closed his eyes.

"What makes it so pleasant to you to take this poison?" I asked. "What physical joy does it give to take it until it kills you?"

"It is not a physical joy," he replied; "it is better than that, it is more. I am often sad; I detest life, which wounds me every day on all sides, with all its angles, its hardships. Opium consoles for everything, makes one take part in all. Do you know that state of mind that I might call teasing irritation? I ordinarily live in that state. And there are two things that can cure me of it: opium or the Orient. As soon as I have taken opium I lie down and wait, perhaps one hour and sometimes two. Then, when it begins to take effect I feel first a slight trembling in the hands and feet, not a cramp, but a vibrant numbness; then little by little I have the strange and delicious sensation of feeling my limbs disappear. It seems to me as if they were taken off, and this feeling grows upon me until it fills me completely. I have no longer any body; I retain merely a kind of pleasant memory of it. Only my head is there, and it works. I muse. I think with an infinite, material joy, with unequaled lucidity, with a surprising penetration. I reason, I deduce, I understand everything. I discover ideas that never before have come to me; I descend to new depths and mount to marvelous heights; I float in an ocean of thought, and I taste the incomparable happiness, the ideal enjoyment of the chaste and serene intoxication of pure intelligence.

Again he stopped and closed his eyes. I said:

## THE ORIENT

"Your longing for the Orient is due only to this constant intoxication. You are living in a state of hallucination. How can one long for that barbarous country, where the mind is dead, where the sterile imagination does not go beyond the narrow limits of life and makes no effort to take flight, to expand and conquer?"

"What does practical thought matter?" he replied. "What I love is dreaming. That only is good, and that only is sweet. Implacable reality would lead me to suicide, if dreaming did not permit me to wait.

"You say that the Orient is the land of barbarians. Stop, wretched man! It is the country of the sages, the hot country where one lets life flow by, where angles are rounded.

"We are the barbarians, we men of the West who call ourselves civilized; we are hateful barbarians, who live a painful life, like brutes.

"Look at our cities built of stone and our furniture made of hard and knotty wood. We mount, panting, a high, narrow stairway, to go into stuffy apartments into which the cold wind comes whistling, only to escape immediately again through a chimney which creates deadly currents of air that are strong enough to turn a windmill. Our chairs are hard, our walls cold and covered with ugly paper; everywhere we are wounded by angles—angles on our tables, on our mantels, on our doors and on our beds. We live standing up or sitting in our chairs, but we never lie down except to sleep, which is ridiculous, for in sleeping you are not conscious of the happiness there is in being stretched out flat.

"And then to think of our intellectual life! It is filled with incessant struggle and strife. Worry

## THE ORIENT

hovers over us and preoccupations tease us; we no longer have time to seek and pursue the two or three good things within our reach.

"It is war to the finish. And our character, even more than our furniture, is full of angles—angles everywhere.

"We are hardly out of bed when we hasten to our work, in rain or snow. We fight against rivals, competition, hostility. Every man is an enemy whom we must fear and overcome and with whom we must resort to ruse. Even love has with us its aspects of victory and defeat: that also is a struggle."

He reflected for some moments and then continued:

"I know the house that I am going to buy. It is square, with a flat roof and wooden trimmings, in the Oriental fashion. From the terrace you can see the sea, where white sails like pointed wings are passing, and Greek or Turkish vessels. There are hardly any openings on the outside walls. A large garden, where the air is heavy under the shadow of palms, is in the center of this abode. A jet of water rises from under the trees and falls in spray into a large marble basin, the bottom of which is covered with golden sand. I shall bathe there at any hour of the day, between two pipes, two dreams, two kisses.

"I will not have any servant, any hideous maid with greasy apron who kicks up the dirty bottom of her skirt with her worn shoes. Oh, that kick of the heel which shows the yellow ankle! It fills my heart with disgust, and yet I cannot avoid it. Those wretches all do it.

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"I shall no longer hear the tramping of shoes on the floor, the loud slamming of doors, the crash of breaking dishes.

"I will have beautiful black slaves, draped in white veils, who run barefoot over heavy carpets.

"My walls shall be soft and rounded, like a woman's breasts; and my divans, ranged in a circle around each apartment, shall be heaped with cushions of all shapes, so that I may lie down in all possible postures.

"Then, when I am tired of this delicious repose, tired of enjoying immobility and my eternal dream, tired of the calm pleasure of well-being, I shall have a swift black or white horse brought to my door.

"And I shall ride away on it, drinking in the air which stings and intoxicates, the air that whistles when one is galloping furiously.

"And I shall fly like an arrow over this colored earth, which intoxicates the eye with the effect of the flavor of wine.

"In the calm of the evening I shall ride madly toward the wide horizon, which is tinged rose-color by the setting sun. Everything is rosy down there in the twilight, the scorched mountains, the sand, the clothing of the Arabs, the white coat of the horses.

"Pink flamingoes rise out of the marshes under the pink sky, and I shall shout deliriously, bathed in the illimitable rosiness of the world.

"I shall no longer see men dressed in black, sitting on uncomfortable chairs and drinking absinthe while talking of business or walking along the pavements in the midst of the deafening noise of cabs in the street.

## THE ORIENT

"I shall know nothing of the state of the Bourse, the fluctuations of stocks and bonds, all the useless stupidities in which we waste our short, miserable and treacherous existence. Why all this trouble, all this suffering, all these struggles? I shall rest, sheltered from the wind, in my bright, sumptuous home.

"And I shall have four or five wives in luxurious apartments—five wives who have come from the five quarters of the earth and who will bring to me a taste of feminine beauty as found in all races."

Again he stopped and then he said softly:

"Leave me."

I went, and I never saw him again.

Two months later he sent me these three words only: "I am happy."

His letter smelled of incense and other sweet perfumes.

## ALEXANDRE

**A**T four o'clock that day, as on every other day, Alexandre rolled the three-wheeled chair for cripples up to the door of the little house; then, in obedience to the doctor's orders, he would push his old and infirm mistress about until six o'clock.

When he had palced the light vehicle against the step, just at the place where the old lady could most easily enter it, he went into the house; and soon a furious, hoarse old soldier's voice was heard cursing inside the house: it issued from the master, the retired ex-captain of infantry, Joseph Maramballe.

Then could be heard the noise of doors being slammed, chairs being pushed about, and hasty footsteps; then nothing more. After a few seconds, Alexandre reappeared on the threshold, supporting with all his strength Madame Maramballe, who was exhausted from the exertion of descending the stairs. When she was at last settled in the rolling chair, Alexandre passed behind it, grasped the handle, and set out toward the river.

Thus they crossed the little town every day amid the respectful greeting of all. These bows were perhaps meant as much for the servant as for the mistress, for if she was loved and esteemed by all, this old trooper, with his long, white, patriarchal beard, was considered a model domestic.

## ALEXANDRE

The July sun was beating down unmercifully on the street, bathing the low houses in its crude and burning light. Dogs were sleeping on the sidewalk in the shade of the houses, and Alexandre, a little out of breath, hastened his footsteps in order sooner to arrive at the avenue which leads to the water.

Madame Maramballe was already slumbering under her white parasol, the point of which sometimes grazed along the man's impassive face. As soon as they had reached the Allée des Tilleuls, she awoke in the shade of the trees, and she said in a kindly voice: "Go more slowly, my poor boy; you will kill yourself in this heat."

Along this path, completely covered by arched linden trees, the Mavettek flowed in its winding bed bordered by willows.

The gurgling of the eddies and the splashing of the little waves against the rocks lent to the walk the charming music of babbling water and the freshness of damp air. Madame Maramballe inhaled with deep delight the humid charm of this spot and then murmured: "Ah! I feel better now! But he wasn't in a good humor to-day."

Alexandre answered: "No, madame."

For thirty-five years he had been in the service of this couple, first as officer's orderly, then as simple valet who did not wish to leave his masters; and for the last six years, every afternoon, he had been wheeling his mistress about through the narrow streets of the town. From this long and devoted service, and then from this daily *tête-à-tête*, a kind of familiarity arose between the old lady and the devoted servant, affectionate on her part, deferential on his.

## ALEXANDRE

They talked over the affairs of the house exactly as if they were equals. Their principal subject of conversation and of worry was the bad disposition of the captain, soured by a long career which had begun with promise, run along without promotion, and ended without glory.

Madame Maramballe continued: "He certainly was not in a good humor to-day. This happens too often since he has left the service."

And Alexandre, with a sigh, completed his mistress's thoughts: "Oh, madame might say that it happens every day and that it also happened before leaving the army."

"That is true. But the poor man has been so unfortunate. He began with a brave deed, which obtained for him the Legion of Honor at the age of twenty; and then from twenty to fifty he was not able to rise higher than captain, whereas at the beginning he expected to retire with at least the rank of colonel."

"Madame might also admit that it was his fault. If he had not always been as cutting as a whip, his superiors would have loved and protected him better. Harshness is of no use; one should try to please if one wishes to advance. As far as his treatment of us is concerned, it is also our fault, since we are willing to remain with him, but with others it's different."

Madame Maramballe was thinking. Oh, for how many years had she thus been thinking of the brutality of her husband, whom she had married long ago because he was a handsome officer, decorated quite young, and full of promise, so they said! What mistakes one makes in life!

## ALEXANDRE

She murmured: "Let us stop a while, my poor Alexandre, and you rest on that bench."

It was a little worm-eaten bench, placed at a turn in the alley. Every time they came in this direction Alexandre was accustomed to making a short pause on this seat.

He sat down and with a proud and familiar gesture he took his beautiful white beard in his hand, and, closing his fingers over it, ran them down to the point, which he held for a minute at the pit of his stomach, as if once more to verify the length of this growth.

Madame Maramballe continued: "I married him; it is only just and natural that I should bear his injustice; but what I do not understand is why you also should have supported it, my good Alexandre!"

He merely shrugged his shoulders and answered: "Oh! I—madame."

She added: "Really. I have often wondered. When I married him you were his orderly and you could hardly do otherwise than endure him. But why did you remain with us, who pay you so little and who treat you so badly, when you could have done as every one else does, settle down, marry, have a family?"

He answered: "Oh, madame! with me it's different."

Then he was silent; but he kept pulling his beard as if he were ringing a bell within him, as if he were trying to pull it out, and he rolled his eyes like a man who is greatly embarrassed.

Madame Maramballe was following her own train

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of thought: "You are not a peasant. You have an education—"

He interrupted her proudly: "I studied surveying, madame."

"Then why did you stay with us, and blast your prospects?"

He stammered: "That's it! that's it! it's the fault of my disposition."

"How so, of your disposition?"

"Yes, when I become attached to a person I become attached to him, that's all."

She began to laugh: "You are not going to try to tell me that Maramballe's sweet disposition caused you to become attached to him for life."

He was fidgeting about on his bench visibly embarrassed, and he muttered behind his long beard: "It was not he, it was you!"

The old lady, who had a sweet face, with a snowy line of curly white hair between her forehead and her bonnet, turned around in her chair and observed her servant with a surprised look, exclaiming: "I, my poor Alexandre! How so?"

He began to look up in the air, then to one side, then toward the distance, turning his head as do timid people when forced to admit shameful secrets. At last he exclaimed, with the courage of a trooper who is ordered to the line of fire: "You see, it's this way—the first time I brought a letter to mademoiselle from the lieutenant, mademoiselle gave me a franc and a smile, and that settled it."

Not understanding well, she questioned him: "Explain yourself."

Then he cried out, like a malefactor who is ad-

## ALEXANDRE

mitting a fatal crime: "I had a sentiment for madame! There!"

She answered nothing, stopped looking at him, hung her head, and thought. She was good, full of justice, gentleness, reason, and tenderness. In a second she saw the immense devotion of this poor creature, who had given up everything in order to live beside her, without saying anything. And she felt as if she could cry. Then, with a sad but not angry expression, she said: "Let us return home."

He rose and began to push the wheeled chair.

As they approached the village they saw Captain Maramballe coming toward them. As soon as he joined them he asked his wife, with a visible desire of getting angry: "What have we for dinner?"

"Some chicken with flageolets."

He lost his temper: "Chicken! chicken! always chicken! By all that's holy, I've had enough chicken! Have you no ideas in your head, that you make me eat chicken every day?"

She answered, in a resigned tone: "But, my dear, you know that the doctor has ordered it for you. It's the best thing for your stomach. If your stomach were well, I could give you many things which I do not dare set before you now."

Then, exasperated, he planted himself in front of Alexandre, exclaiming: "Well, if my stomach is out of order it's the fault of that brute. For thirty-five years he has been poisoning me with his abominable cooking."

Madame Maramballe suddenly turned about completely, in order to see the old domestic. Their eyes met, and in this single glance they both said "Thank you!" to each other.

## A FATHER'S CONFESSION

ALL Véziers-le-Réthel had followed the funeral procession of M. Badon-Lereminice to the grave, and the last words of the funeral oration pronounced by the delegate of the district remained in the minds of all: "He was an honest man, at least!"

An honest man he had been in all the known acts of his life, in his words, in his examples, his attitude, his behavior, his enterprises, in the cut of his beard and the shape of his hats. He never had said a word that did not set an example, never had given an alms without adding a word of advice, never had extended his hand without appearing to bestow a benediction.

He left two children, a boy and a girl. His son was counselor general, and his daughter, having married a lawyer, M. Poirel de la Voulte, moved in the best society of Véziers.

They were inconsolable at the death of their father, for they loved him sincerely.

As soon as the ceremony was over, the son, daughter and son-in-law returned to the house of mourning, and, shutting themselves in the library, they opened the will, the seals of which were to be broken by them alone and only after the coffin had been placed in the ground. This wish was expressed by a notice on the envelope.

## A FATHER'S CONFESSION

M. Poirel de la Voulte tore open the envelope, in his character of a lawyer used to such operations, and having adjusted his spectacles, he read in a monotonous voice, made for reading the details of contracts :

My children, my dear children, I could not sleep the eternal sleep in peace if I did not make to you from the tomb a confession, the confession of a crime, remorse for which has ruined my life. Yes, I committed a crime, a frightful, abominable crime.

I was twenty-six years old, and I had just been called to the bar in Paris, and was living the life of young men from the provinces who are stranded in this town without acquaintances, relatives, or friends.

I took a sweetheart. There are beings who cannot live alone. I was one of those. Solitude fills me with horrible anguish, the solitude of my room beside my fire in the evening. I feel then as if I were alone on earth, alone, but surrounded by vague dangers, unknown and terrible things; and the partition that separates me from my neighbor, my neighbor whom I do not know, keeps me at as great a distance from him as the stars that I see through my window. A sort of fever pervades me, a fever of impatience and of fear, and the silence of the walls terrifies me. The silence of a room where one lives alone is so intense and so melancholy! It is not only a silence of the mind; when a piece of furniture cracks a shudder goes through you, for you expect no noise in this melancholy abode.

How many times, nervous and timid from this motionless silence, I have begun to talk, to repeat words without rhyme or reason, only to make some sound. My voice at those times sounds so strange that I am afraid of that, too. Is there anything more dreadful than talking to one's self in an empty house? One's voice sounds like that of another, an unknown voice talking aimlessly, to no one, into the empty air, with no ear to listen to it, for one knows before they escape into the solitude of the room exactly what words will be uttered. And when they resound lugubriously in the silence, they seem no more than an echo, the peculiar echo of words whispered by one's thought.

My sweetheart was a young girl like other young girls who live in Paris on wages that are insufficient to keep them. She was gentle, good, simple. Her parents lived at Poissy. She went to spend several days with them from time to time.

For a year I lived quietly with her, fully decided to leave her when I should find some one whom I liked well enough to marry. I would make a little provision for this one, for it is an understood thing in our social set that a woman's love should be paid for, in money if she is poor, in presents if she is rich.

But one day she told me she was *enceinte*. I was thunderstruck, and saw in a second that my life would be ruined. I

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saw the fetter that I should wear until my death, everywhere, in my future family life, in my old age, forever; the fetter of a woman bound to my life through a child; the fetter of the child whom I must bring up, watch over, protect, while keeping myself unknown to him, and keeping him hidden from the world. I was greatly disturbed at this news, and a confused longing, a criminal desire, surged through my mind; I did not formulate it, but I felt it in my heart, ready to come to the surface, as if some one hidden behind a portière should await the signal to come out. If some accident might only happen! So many of these little beings die before they are born!

Oh, I did not wish my sweetheart to die! The poor girl, I loved her very much! But I wished, possibly, that the child might die before I saw it.

He was born. I set up housekeeping in my little bachelor apartment, an imitation home, with a horrible child. He looked like all children; I did not care for him. Fathers, you see, do not show affection until later. They have not the instinctive and passionate tenderness of mothers; their affection has to be awakened gradually, their mind must become attached by bonds formed each day between beings that live in each other's society.

A year passed. I now avoided my home, which was too small, where soiled linen, baby-clothes and stockings the size of gloves were lying round, where a thousand articles of all descriptions lay on the furniture, on the arm of an easy-chair, everywhere. I went out chiefly that I might not hear the child cry, for he cried on the slightest pretext, when he was bathed, when he was touched, when he was put to bed, when he was taken up in the morning, incessantly.

I had made a few acquaintances, and I met at a reception the woman who was to be your mother. I fell in love with her and became desirous to marry her. I courted her; I asked her parents' consent to our marriage, and it was granted.

I found myself in this dilemma: I must either marry this young girl whom I adored, having a child already, or else tell the truth and renounce her, and happiness, my future, everything; for her parents, who were people of rigid principles, would not give her to me if they knew.

I passed a month of horrible anguish, of mortal torture, a month haunted by a thousand frightful thoughts; and I felt developing in me a hatred toward my son, toward that little morsel of living, screaming flesh, who blocked my path, interrupted my life, condemned me to an existence without hope, without all those vague expectations that make the charm of youth.

But just then my companion's mother became ill, and I was left alone with the child.

It was in December, and the weather was terribly cold. What a night! My companion had just left. I had dined alone in my little dining-room and I went gently into the room where the little one was asleep.

I sat down in an armchair before the fire. The wind was blowing, making the windows rattle, a dry, frosty wind; and I saw through the window the stars shining with that piercing brightness that they have on frosty nights.

Then the idea that had obsessed me for a month rose again

## A FATHER'S CONFESSION

to the surface. As soon as I was quiet it came to me and harassed me. It ate into my mind like a fixed idea, just as cancers must eat into the flesh. It was there, in my head, in my heart, in my whole body, it seemed to me; and it swallowed me up as a wild beast might have. I endeavored to drive it away, to repulse it, to open my mind to other thoughts, as one opens a window to the fresh morning breeze to drive out the vitiated air; but I could not drive it from my brain, not even for a second. I do not know how to express this torture. It gnawed at my soul, and I felt a frightful pain, a real physical and moral pain.

My life was ruined! How could I escape from this situation? How could I draw back, and how could I confess?

And I loved the one who was to become your mother with a mad passion, which this insurmountable obstacle only aggravated.

A terrible rage was taking possession of me, choking me, a rage that verged on madness! Surely I was crazy that evening!

The child was sleeping. I got up and looked at it as it slept. It was he, this abortion, this spawn, this nothing, that condemned me to irremediable unhappiness!

He was asleep, his mouth open, wrapped in his bed-clothes in a crib beside my bed, where I could not sleep.

How did I ever do what I did? How do I know? What force urged me on? What malevolent power took possession of me? Oh! the temptation to crime came to me without any forewarning. All I recall is that my heart beat tumultuously. It beat so hard that I could hear it, as one hears the strokes of a hammer behind a partition. That is all I can recall—the beating of my heart! In my head there was a strange confusion, a tumult, a senseless disorder, a lack of presence of mind. It was one of those hours of bewilderment and hallucination when a man is neither conscious of his actions nor able to guide his will.

I gently raised the coverings from the body of the child; I turned them down to the foot of the crib, and he lay there uncovered and naked.

He did not wake. Then I went toward the window, softly, quite softly, and I opened it.

A breath of icy air glided in like an assassin; it was so cold that I drew aside, and the two candles flickered. I remained standing near the window, not daring to turn round, as if for fear of seeing what was going on behind me, and feeling the icy air continually across my forehead, my cheeks, my hands, the deadly air which kept streaming in. I stood there a long time.

I was not thinking, I was not reflecting. All at once a little cough caused me to shudder frightfully from head to foot, a shudder that I feel still to the roots of my hair. And with a frantic movement I abruptly closed both sides of the window and, turning round, ran over to the crib.

He was still asleep, his mouth open, quite naked. I touched his legs; they were icy cold, and I covered them up.

My heart was suddenly touched, grieved, filled with pity, tenderness, love for this poor innocent being that I had wished

## A FATHER'S CONFESSION

to kill. I kissed his fine, soft hair long and tenderly; then I went and sat down before the fire.

I reflected with amazement, with horror on what I had done, asking myself whence come those tempests of the soul in which a man loses all perspective of things, all command over himself, and acts as in a condition of mad intoxication, not knowing whither he is going—like a vessel in a hurricane.

The child coughed again, and it gave my heart a wrench. Suppose it should die! O God! O God! What would become of me?

I rose from my chair to go and look at him, and with a candle in my hand I leaned over him. Seeing him breathing quietly I felt reassured, when he coughed a third time. It gave me such a shock that I started backward, just as one does at sight of something horrible, and let my candle fall.

As I stood erect after picking it up, I noticed that my temples were bathed in perspiration, that cold sweat which is the result of anguish of soul. And I remained until daylight bending over my son, becoming calm when he remained quiet for some time, and filled with atrocious pain when a weak cough came from his mouth.

He awoke with his eyes red, his throat choked, and with an air of suffering.

When the woman came in to arrange my room I sent her at once for a doctor. He came at the end of an hour, and said, after examining the child:

"Did he not catch cold?"

I began to tremble like a person with palsy, and I faltered: "No, I do not think so."

And then I said:

"What is the matter? Is it serious?"

"I do not know yet," he replied. "I will come again this evening."

He came that evening. My son had remained almost all day in a condition of drowsiness, coughing from time to time. During the night inflammation of the lungs set in.

That lasted ten days. I cannot express what I suffered in those interminable hours that divide morning from night, night from morning.

He died.

And since—since that moment, I have not passed one hour, not a single hour, without the frightful burning recollection, a gnawing recollection, a memory that seems to wring my heart, awaking in me like a savage beast imprisoned in the depths of my soul.

Oh! if I could have gone mad!

M. Poirel de la Voulte raised his spectacles with a motion that was peculiar to him whenever he finished reading a contract; and the three heirs of the defunct looked at one another without speaking, pale and motionless.

## A FATHER'S CONFESSION

'At the end of a minute the lawyer resumed:  
"That must be destroyed."

The other two bent their heads in sign of assent. He lighted a candle, carefully separated the pages containing the damaging confession from those relating to the disposition of money, then he held them over the candle and threw them into the fireplace.

And they watched the white sheets as they burned, till they were presently reduced to little crumbling black heaps. And as some words were still visible in white tracing, the daughter, with little strokes of the toe of her shoe, crushed the burning paper, mixing it with the old ashes in the fireplace.

Then all three stood there watching it for some time, as if they feared that the destroyed secret might escape from the fireplace.

## REMEMBRANCES

I WAS crossing Rouen the other day. It was time for the Saint-Romain fair. Just imagine a replica of the Neuilly fair, only more important, more solemn, with a provincial seriousness, a more ponderous movement of the crowd, which is also more compact and more silent.

There are several miles of booths, for there are more shops than at Neuilly, as the country people buy more. One sees venders of glassware, porcelain, cutlery, ribbons buttons, books for the farmers, strange and comical objects, exhibitors of monstrosities, what the Norman peasants call "faiseux vé de quoi," and a profusion of colossal women who seemed greatly to please the inhabitants of Rouen. One of them had just sent a very pleasant letter to invite the journalists to come and call on her, excusing herself for not being able to present herself at their homes, as her dimensions forbade her going out.

Louis XIV outdone!

Then we have wrestlers: the pleasing M. Bazin, who talks as if he were from the Comédie-Française and greets the public with his fingers.

Here we have a circus of monkeys, another of fleas, another circus of horses, hundreds of other curiosities. The crowd is quite singular: city peo-

## REMEMBRANCES

ple dressed in their Sunday clothes, with serious and moderate movements, the man and the woman walking along together, with profound seriousness, as if nature had put the same machinery within them; people from the country with still slower but quite different movements, the man bent over and dragging his legs, the woman balancing herself as if she were balancing pails of milk.

The most remarkable thing about the Saint-Romain fair is the odor, the smell, which I love, because I smelled it when I was a child, but which would undoubtedly disgust you; it is a mixture of broiled herring, waffles, and baked apples. Along-side of each booth and in every vacant corner herrings are being broiled, for we are in the middle of the fishing season; waffles are being cooked, and apples are baking in large tin pans.

I hear a bell; and suddenly a strange emotion seizes me. Two memories have come back to me, one of them dating from my earliest years, the other from my youth. I asked the friend who is accompanying me: "Is it the same man?"

He understands me, and answers: "Yes, the very same—or, rather, they are both there. Bouilhet's violin is still there."

And soon I see the little tent where is being played, just as in my childhood, the *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, which delighted Gustave Flaubert and Louis Bouilhet.

On the platform an old white-haired man, so old and so bent that he looks to be about a hundred, is talking with the classic harlequin. Just think, madame, my parents also heard this *Temptation of Saint Anthony* when they were at the age of

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ten or twelve! And it is still the same man who is exhibiting it.

On his head is a sign on which is written: "To let, on account of ill health." And if the old man finds no audience this naïve and comical entertainment which has amused all the generations of little Normans for the last sixty years will disappear.

I go up the shaky wooden steps, for I wish once more, and perhaps for the last time, to see the Saint Anthony of my childhood.

Tiers of wretched pine benches support a whole colony of little beings, seated or standing, chattering, making the noise of a crowd, a ten-year-old crowd. The parents are quiet, accustomed to this yearly task. A few lanterns light up the dark interior of the tent.

The curtain rises. A large marionette appears, making strange and clumsy gestures as it hangs from its strings.

Then all the children begin to laugh, waving hands, stamping feet, and shrill cries of joy escape from all lips.

I feel as if I were one of these children, as if I had come in in order to see, to be amused and to believe, as they do. I suddenly find all my former sensations awakening; and, under the hallucination of memory, I feel myself once more the little being that I used to be, at this same spectacle.

A violin begins to play. I stand up to look. It is the same man: he also is old, very thin, and very sad, with long white hair brushed back over a thin, intelligent, proud face.

I remember my second visit to Saint Anthony. I

## REMEMBRANCES

was sixteen. One day, while I was a pupil at the Lycée of Rouen—a Thursday, I believe—I was going up the Rue Bihorel in order to show some verses to my stern and illustrious master, Louis Bouilhet.

As I entered the poet's study I saw, through a cloud of smoke, two large, tall men, ensconced in armchairs, smoking and talking.

Opposite Louis Bouilhet was Gustave Flaubert.

I put my verses in my pocket and sat in my chair in the corner, listening quietly. Toward four o'clock Flaubert rose, saying: "Come, accompany me to the end of your street; I'll walk to the boat."

When we reached the boulevard where the Saint-Romain fair is held, Bouilhet suddenly exclaimed: "Let us take a walk around the booths."

And they walked along slowly, side by side, both taller than everybody else, amusing themselves like children and exchanging weighty remarks about the faces they observed.

They imagined characters from the expression of the face, invented conversations between husbands and wives. Bouilhet spoke like the man and Flaubert like the woman, with their Norman expressions, dragging accent, and the air of astonishment that characterizes the people of that district. When they arrived before Saint Anthony's tent, Bouilhet exclaimed: "Let us go in and see the violin!"

We entered.

A few years later, when the poet was dead, Gustave Flaubert published his posthumous verses, the *Last Songs*. One of them is called "The Booth at the Fair."

Here are a few fragments:

## REMEMBRANCES

### THE FIDDLER

How sad he seemed as he sat apart!  
How he shook as he played his violin!  
While through each crack of the crazy shack  
The wind came whistling in.

St. Anthony prayed amid the throng,  
And hid his eyes as the devils danced,  
While the frightened pig, with a torch tied fast  
To his tail, bewildered, pranced.

But the fiddler—oh, how wan was he!  
How the bow scraped in its sad despair!  
And oh, to note the shabby coat  
That shone in the changing glare!

His tune must follow the shifting mood  
Of the tinsel puppets—now sad, now gay;  
Anon his bow must grind out low  
A curse, and now a jest must play.

Still must he play, for it meant his bread,  
And perchance a pipe when the day was done;  
An attic bed to rest his head  
Was the boon his art had won.

At times he forgot his heart's disguise,  
Forgot for a moment the part he played,  
And wildly glanced at the forms that danced  
In gold and warmth arrayed.

Then, like a dreamer with soul above  
The vain and vanishing things below,  
As he played his song for the tinsel throng  
His mind seemed not to know

Of the world with all its sorrow and care,  
Where all is fleeting and false and vain;  
For lo, as he played, his poor art made  
His soul look up again.

When I left the booth I seemed to hear Flaubert's deep voice exclaim: "Poor devil!"

And Bouilhet answered: "Yes; life is not all fun for some people."

## A HUMBLE DRAMA

M EETINGS that are unexpected constitute the charm of traveling. Who has not experienced the joy of suddenly coming across a Parisian, a college friend, or a neighbor, five hundred miles from home? Who has not passed a night awake in one of those small, rattling country stage-coaches, in regions where steam is still a thing unknown, beside a strange young woman, of whom one has caught only a glimpse in the dim light of the lantern, as she entered the carriage in front of a white house in some small country town?

And the next morning, when one's head and ears feel numb with the continuous tinkling of the bells and the loud rattling of the windows, what a charming sensation it is to see your pretty neighbor open her eyes, startled, glance around her, arrange her rebellious hair with her slender fingers, adjust her hat, feel with sure hand whether her corset is still in place, her waist straight, and her skirt not too wrinkled!

She glances at you coldly and curiously. Then she leans back and no longer seems interested in anything but the country.

In spite of yourself, you watch her; and in spite of yourself you keep on thinking of her. Who is she? Whence does she come? Where is she going? In spite of yourself you spin a little romance around

## A HUMBLE DRAMA

her. She is pretty; she seems charming! Happy he who . . . Life might be delightful with her. Who knows? She is perhaps the woman of our dreams, the one suited to our disposition, the one for whom our heart calls.

And how delicious even the disappointment at seeing her get out at the gate of a country house! A man stands there, who is awaiting her, with two children and two maids. He takes her in his arms and kisses as he lifts her out. Then she stoops over the little ones, who hold up their hands to her; she kisses them tenderly; and then they all go away together, down a path, while the maids catch the packages which the driver throws down to them from the coach.

Adieu! It is all over. You never will see her again! Adieu to the young woman who has passed the night by your side. You know her no more, you have not spoken to her; all the same, you feel a little sad to see her go. Adieu!

I have had many of these souvenirs of travel, some joyous and some sad.

Once I was in Auvergne, tramping through those delightful French mountains, that are not too high, not too steep, but friendly and familiar. I had climbed the Sancy, and entered a little inn, near a pilgrim's chapel called Notre-Dame de Vassivière, when I saw a queer, ridiculous-looking old woman breakfasting alone at the end table.

She was at least seventy years old, tall, skinny, and angular, and her white hair was puffed around her temples in the old-fashioned style. She was dressed like a traveling Englishwoman, in awkward, queer clothing, like a person who is indifferent to

## A HUMBLE DRAMA

dress. She was eating an omelet and drinking water.

Her face was peculiar, with restless eyes and the expression of one with whom fate has dealt unkindly. I watched her, in spite of myself, thinking: "Who is she? What is the life of this woman? Why is she wandering alone through these mountains?"

She paid and rose to leave, drawing up over her shoulders an astonishing little shawl, the two ends of which hung over her arms. From a corner of the room she took an alpenstock, which was covered with names traced with a hot iron; then she went out, straight, erect, with the long steps of a letter-carrier who is setting out on his route.

A guide was waiting for her at the door, and both went away. I watched them go down the valley, along the road marked by a line of high wooden crosses. She was taller than her companion, and seemed to walk faster than he.

Two hours later I was climbing the edge of the deep funnel that incloses Lake Pavin in a marvelous and enormous basin of verdure, full of trees, bushes, rocks, and flowers. This lake is so round that it seems as if the outline had been drawn with a pair of compasses, so clear and blue that one might deem it a flood of azure come down from the sky, so charming that one would like to live in a hut on the wooded slope which dominates this crater, where the cold, still water is sleeping.

The Englishwoman was standing there like a statue, gazing upon the transparent sheet down in the dead volcano. She was straining her eyes to penetrate below the surface down to the unknown

## A HUMBLE DRAMA

depths, where monstrous trout which have devoured all the other fish are said to live. As I was passing close by her, it seemed to me that two big tears were brimming her eyes. But she departed at a great pace, to rejoin her guide, who had stayed behind in an inn at the foot of the path leading to the lake.

I did not see her again that day.

The next day, at nightfall, I came to the château of Murol. The old fortress, an enormous tower standing on a peak in the midst of a large valley, where three valleys intersect, rears its brown, uneven, cracked surface into the sky ; it is round, from its large circular base to the crumbling turrets on its pinnacles.

It astonishes the eye more than any other ruin by its simple mass, its majesty, its grave and imposing air of antiquity. It stands there, alone, high as a mountain, a dead queen, but still the queen of the valleys stretched out beneath it. You go up by a slope planted with firs, then you enter a narrow gate, and stop at the foot of the walls, in the first inclosure, in full view of the entire country.

Inside there are ruined halls, crumbling stairways, unknown cavities, dungeons, walls cut through in the middle, vaulted roofs held up one knows not how, and a mass of stones and crevices, overgrown with grass, where animals glide in and out.

I was exploring this ruin alone.

Suddenly I perceived behind a bit of wall a being, a kind of phantom, like the spirit of this ancient and crumbling habitation.

I was taken aback with surprise, almost with

## A HUMBLE DRAMA

fear, when I recognized the old lady whom I had seen twice.

She was weeping, with big tears in her eyes, and held her handkerchief in her hand.

I turned around to go away, when she spoke to me, apparently ashamed to have been surprised in her grief.

"Yes, monsieur, I am crying. That does not happen often to me."

"Pardon me, madame, for having disturbed you," I stammered, confused, not knowing what to say. "Some misfortune has doubtless come to you."

"Yes. No—I am like a lost dog," she murmured, and began to sob, with her handkerchief over her eyes.

Moved by these contagious tears, I took her hand, trying to calm her.

Then brusquely she told me her history, as if no longer able to bear her grief alone.

"Oh! Oh! Monsieur—if you knew—the sorrow in which I live—in what sorrow.

"Once I was happy. I have a house down there—at home. I cannot go back to it any more; I shall never go back to it again, it is too hard to bear.

"I have a son. It is he! it is he! Children don't know. Oh, one has such a short time to live! If I should see him now I should perhaps not recognize him. How I loved him? How I loved him! Even before he was born, when I felt him move. And after that! How I have kissed and caressed and cherished him! If you knew how many nights I have passed in watching him sleep, and how many in thinking of him. I was crazy about him. When

## A HUMBLE DRAMA

he was eight years old his father sent him to boarding-school. That was the end. He no longer belonged to me. Oh, heavens! He came to see me every Sunday. That was all!

"He went to college in Paris. Then he came only four times a year, and every time I was astonished to see how he had changed, to find him taller without having seen him grow. They stole his childhood from me, his confidence, and his love which otherwise would not have gone away from me; they stole my joy in seeing him grow, in seeing him become a little man.

"I saw him four times a year. Think of it! And at every one of his visits his body, his eye, his movements, his voice his laugh, were no longer the same, were no longer mine. All these things change so quickly in a child; and it is so sad if one is not there to see them change; one no longer recognizes him.

"One year he came with down on his cheek! He! my son! I was dumfounded—would you believe it? I hardly dared to kiss him. Was it really he, my little, little curly head of old, my dear, dear child, whom I had held in his diapers on my knee, and who had nursed at my breast with his little greedy lips—was it he, this tall, brown boy, who no longer knew how to kiss me, who seemed to love me as a matter of duty, who called me 'mother' for the sake of politeness, and who kissed me on the forehead, when I felt like crushing him in my arms?

"My husband died. Then my parents, and then my two sisters. When Death enters a house it seems as if he were hurrying to do his utmost, so as not

## A HUMBLE DRAMA

to have to return for a long time after that. He spares only one or two to mourn the others.

"I remained alone. My tall son was then studying law. I was hoping to live and die near him, and I went to him so that we could live together. But he had fallen into the ways of young men, and he gave me to understand that I was in his way. So I left. I was wrong in doing so, but I suffered too much in feeling myself in his way, I, his mother! And I came back home.

"I hardly ever saw him again.

'He married. What a joy! At last we should be together for good. I should have grandchildren. His wife was an Englishwoman, who took a dislike to me. Why? Perhaps she thought that I loved him too much.

"Again I was obliged to go away. And I was alone. Yes, monsieur.

"Then he went to England, to live with them, with his wife's parents. Do you understand? They have him—they have my son for themselves. They have stolen him from me. He writes to me once a month. At first he came to see me. But now he no longer comes.

"It is now four years since I saw him last. His face then was wrinkled and his hair white. Was that possible? This man, my son, almost an old man? My little rosy child of old? No doubt I shall never see him again.

"And so I travel about all the year. I go east and west, as you see, with no companion.

"I am like a lost dog. Adieu, monsieur! don't stay here with me for it hurts me to have told you all this."

## A HUMBLE DRAMA

I went down the hill, and on turning round to glance back, I saw the old woman standing on a broken wall, looking out upon the mountains, the long valley and Lake Chambon in the distance.

And her skirt and the queer little shawl which she wore around her thin shoulders were fluttering like a flag in the wind.

## THE DIARY OF A MADMAN

**H**E was dead—the head of a high tribunal, the upright magistrate, whose irreproachable life was a proverb in all the courts of France. Advocates, young counsellors, judges had greeted him at sight of his large, thin, pale face lighted up by two sparkling deep-set eyes, bowing low in token of respect.

He had passed his life in pursuing crime and in protecting the weak. Swindlers and murderers had no more redoubtable enemy, for he seemed to read the most secret thoughts of their minds.

He was dead, now, at the age of eighty-two, honored by the homage and followed by the regrets of a whole people. Soldiers in red trousers had escorted him to the tomb and men in white cravats had spoken words and shed tears that seemed to be sincere beside his grave.

But here is the strange paper found by the dismayed notary in the desk where he had kept the records of great criminals! It was entitled:

WHY?

*20th June, 1851.* I have just left court. I have condemned Blondel to death! Now, why did this man kill his five children? Frequently one meets with people to whom the destruction of life is a pleasure. Yes, yes, it should be a pleasure, the greatest of all, perhaps, for is not killing the next thing

## THE DIARY OF A MADMAN

to creating? To make and to destroy! These two words contain the history of the universe, all the history of worlds, all that is, all! Why is it not intoxicating to kill?

*25th June.* To think that a being is there who lives, who walks, who runs. A being? What is a being? That animated thing, that bears in it the principle of motion and a will ruling that motion. It is attached to nothing, this thing. Its feet do not belong to the ground. It is a grain of life that moves on the earth, and this grain of life, coming I know not whence, one can destroy at one's will. Then nothing—nothing more. It perishes, it is finished.

*26th June.* Why then is it a crime to kill? Yes, why? On the contrary, it is the law of nature. The mission of every being is to kill; he kills to live, and he kills to kill. The beast kills without ceasing, all day, every instant of his existence. Man kills without ceasing, to nourish himself; but since he needs, besides, to kill for pleasure, he has invented hunting! The child kills the insects he finds, the little birds, all the little animals that come in his way. But this does not suffice for the irresistible need to massacre that is in us. It is not enough to kill beasts; we must kill man too. Long ago this need was satisfied by human sacrifices. Now the requirements of social life have made murder a crime. We condemn and punish the assassin! But as we cannot live without yielding to this natural and imperious instinct of death, we relieve ourselves, from time to time, by wars. Then a whole nation slaughters another nation. It is a feast of blood, a feast that maddens armies and that intoxicates civilians, women

## THE DIARY OF A MADMAN

and children, who read, by lamplight at night, the feverish story of massacre.

One might suppose that those destined to accomplish these butcheries of men would be despised! No, they are loaded with honors. They are clad in gold and in resplendent garments; they wear plumes on their heads and ornaments on their breasts, and they are given crosses, rewards, titles of every kind. They are proud, respected, loved by women, cheered by the crowd, solely because their mission is to shed human blood; They drag through the streets their instruments of death, that the passer-by, clad in black, looks on with envy. For to kill is the great law set by nature in the heart of existence! There is nothing more beautiful and honorable than killing!

*30th June.* To kill is the law, because nature loves eternal youth. She seems to cry in all her unconscious acts: "Quick! quick! quick!" The more she destroys, the more she renews herself.

*2d July.* A human being—what is a human being? Through thought it is a reflection of all that is; through memory and science it is an abridged edition of the universe whose history it represents, a mirror of things and of nations, each human being becomes a microcosm in the macrocosm.

*3d July.* It must be a pleasure, unique and full of zest, to kill; to have there before one the living, thinking being; to make therein a little hole, nothing but a little hole, to see that red thing flow which is the blood, which makes life; and to have before one only a heap of limp flesh, cold, inert, void of thought!

*5th August.* I, who have passed my life in judging, condemning, killing by the spoken word, killing by the guillotine those who had killed by the knife, I,

## THE DIARY OF A MADMAN

I, if I should do as all the assassins have done whom I have smitten, I—I—who would know it?

*10th August.* Who would ever know? Who would ever suspect me, me, me, especially if I should choose a being I had no interest in doing away with?

*15th August.* The temptation has come to me. It pervades my whole being; my hands tremble with the desire to kill.

*22d August.* I could resist no longer. I killed a little creature as an experiment, for a beginning. Jean, my servant, had a goldfinch in a cage hung in the office window. I sent him on an errand, and I took the little bird in my hand, in my hand where I felt its heart beat. It was warm. I went up to my room. From time to time I squeezed it tighter; its heart beat faster; this was atrocious and delicious. I was near choking it. But I could not see the blood.

Then I took scissors, short-nail scissors, and I cut its throat with three slits, quite gently. It opened its bill, it struggled to escape me, but I held it, oh! I held it—I could have held a mad dog—and I saw the blood trickle.

And then I did as assassins do—real ones. I washed the scissors, I washed my hands. I sprinkled water and took the body, the corpse, to the garden to hide it. I buried it under a strawberry-plant. It will never be found. Every day I shall eat a strawberry from that plant. How one can enjoy life when one knows how!

My servant cried; he thought his bird flown. How could he suspect me? Ah! ah!

*25th August.* I must kill a man! I must!

*30th August.* It is done. But what a little thing! I had gone for a walk in the forest of Vernes. I was

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thinking of nothing, literally nothing. A child was in the road, a little child eating a slice of bread and butter.

He stops to see me pass and says, "Good-day, Mr. President."

And the thought enters my head, "Shall I kill him?"

I answer: "You are alone, my boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"All alone in the wood?"

"Yes, sir."

The wish to kill him intoxicated me like wine. I approached him quite softly, persuaded that he was going to run away. And, suddenly, I seized him by the throat. He looked at me with terror in his eyes—such eyes! He held my wrists in his little hands and his body writhed like a feather over the fire. Then he moved no more. I threw the body in the ditch, and some weeds on top of it. I returned home, and dined well. What a little thing it was! In the evening I was very gay, light, rejuvenated; I passed the evening at the Prefect's. They found me witty. But I have not seen blood! I am tranquil.

*31st August.* The body has been discovered. They are hunting for the assassin. Ah! ah!

*1st September.* Two tramps have been arrested. Proofs are lacking.

*2d September.* The parents have been to see me. They wept! Ah! ah!

*6th October.* Nothing has been discovered. Some strolling vagabond must have done the deed. Ah! ah! If I had seen the blood flow, it seems to me I should be tranquil now! The desire to kill is in my blood; it is like the passion of youth at twenty.

## THE DIARY OF A MADMAN

*20th October.* Yet another. I was walking by the river, after breakfast. And I saw, under a willow, a fisherman asleep. It was noon. A spade was standing in a potato-field near by, as if expressly for me.

I took it. I returned; I raised it like a club, and with one blow of the edge I cleft the fisherman's head. Oh! he bled, this one! Rose-colored blood. It flowed into the water, quite gently. And I went away with a grave step. If I had been seen! Ah! ah! I should have made an excellent assassin.

*25th October.* The affair of the fisherman makes a great stir. His nephew, who fished with him, is charged with the murder.

*26th October.* The examining magistrate affirms that the nephew is guilty. Everybody in town believes it. Ah! ah!

*27th October.* The nephew makes a very poor witness. He had gone to the village to buy bread and cheese, he declared. He swore that his uncle had been killed in his absence! Who would believe him?

*28th October.* The nephew has all but confessed, they have badgered him so. Ah! ah! Justice!

*15th November.* There are overwhelming proofs against the nephew, who was his uncle's heir. I shall preside at the sessions.

*25th January.* To death! to death! to death! I have had him condemned to death! Ah! ah! The advocate-general spoke like an angel! Ah! ah! Yet another! I shall go to see him executed!

*10th March.* It is done. They guillotined him this morning. He died very well! very well! That gave me pleasure! How fine it is to see a man's head cut off!

## THE DIARY OF A MADMAN

Now, I shall wait, I can wait. It would take such a little thing to let myself be caught.

\* \* \* \* \*

The manuscript contained yet other pages, but without relating any new crime.

Alienist physicians to whom the awful story has been submitted declare that there are in the world many undiscovered madmen as adroit and as much to be feared as this monstrous lunatic.

## MADEMOISELLE COCOTTE

WE were just leaving the asylum when I saw a tall, thin man in a corner of the court who kept on calling an imaginary dog. He was crying in a soft, tender voice: "Cocotte! Come here, Cocotte, my beauty!" and slapping his thigh as one does when calling an animal. I asked the physician, "Who is that man?" He answered: "Oh! he is not at all interesting. He is a coachman named François, who became insane after drowning his dog."

I insisted: "Tell me his story. The most simple and humble things are sometimes those which touch our hearts most deeply."

Here is this man's adventure, which was obtained from a friend of his, a groom:

There was a family of rich *bourgeois* who lived in a suburb of Paris. They had a villa in the middle of a park, at the edge of the Seine. Their coachman was this François, a country fellow, somewhat dull, kind-hearted, simple and easy to deceive.

One evening, as he was returning home, a dog began to follow him. At first he paid no attention to it, but the creature's obstinacy at last made him turn round. He looked to see if he knew this dog. No, he had never seen it. It was a female dog and frightfully thin. She was trotting behind him with a mournful and famished look, her tail between her

## MADEMOISELLE COCOTTE

legs, her ears flattened against her head and stopping and starting whenever he did.

He tried to chase this skeleton away and cried: "Run along! Get out! Kiss! kiss!" She retreated a few steps, then sat down and waited. And when the coachman started to walk again she followed along behind him.

He pretended to pick up some stones. The animal ran a little farther away, but came back again as soon as the man's back was turned.

Then the coachman François took pity on the beast and called her. The dog approached timidly. The man patted her protruding ribs, moved by the beast's misery, and he cried: "Come! come here!" Immediately she began to wag her tail, and, feeling herself taken in, adopted, she began to run along ahead of her new master.

He made her a bed on the straw in the stable, then he ran to the kitchen for some bread. When she had eaten all she could she curled up and went to sleep.

When his employers heard of this the next day they allowed the coachman to keep the animal. It was a good beast, caressing and faithful, intelligent and gentle.

Nevertheless François adored Cocotte, and he kept repeating: "That beast is human. She only lacks speech."

He had a magnificent red leather collar made for her which bore these words engraved on a copper plate: "Mademoiselle Cocotte, belonging to the coachman François."

She was remarkably prolific and four times a year would give birth to a batch of little animals belong-

## MADEMOISELLE COCOTTE

ing to every variety of the canine race. François would pick out one which he would leave her and then he would unmercifully throw the others into the river. But soon the cook joined her complaints to those of the gardener. She would find dogs under the stove, in the ice box, in the coal bin, and they would steal everything they came across.

Finally the master, tired of complaints, impatiently ordered François to get rid of Cocotte. In despair the man tried to give her away. Nobody wanted her. Then he decided to lose her, and he gave her to a teamster, who was to drop her on the other side of Paris, near Joinville-le-Pont.

Cocotte returned the same day. Some decision had to be taken. Five francs was given to a train conductor to take her to Havre. He was to drop her there.

Three days later she returned to the stable, thin, footsore and tired out.

The master took pity on her and let her stay. But other dogs were attracted as before, and one evening, when a big dinner party was on, a stuffed turkey was carried away by one of them right under the cook's nose, and she did not dare to stop him.

This time the master completely lost his temper and said angrily to François: "If you don't throw this beast into the water before to-morrow morning, I'll put you out, do you hear?"

The man was dumbfounded, and he returned to his room to pack his trunk, preferring to leave the place. Then he bethought himself that he could find no other situation as long as he dragged this animal about with him. He thought of his good position, where he was well paid and well fed, and he decided

## MADEMOISELLE COCOTTE

that a dog was really not worth all that. At last he decided to rid himself of Cocotte at daybreak.

He slept badly. He rose at dawn, and taking a strong rope, went to get the dog. She stood up slowly, shook herself, stretched and came to welcome her master.

Then his courage forsook him, and he began to pet her affectionately, stroking her long ears, kissing her muzzle and calling her tender names.

But a neighboring clock struck six. He could no longer hesitate. He opened the door, calling: "Come!" The beast wagged her tail, understanding that she was to be taken out.

They reached the beach, and he chose a place where the water seemed deep. Then he knotted the rope round the leather collar and tied a heavy stone to the other end. He seized Cocotte in his arms and kissed her madly, as though he were taking leave of some human being. He held her to his breast, rocked her and called her "my dear little Cocotte, my sweet little Cocotte," and she grunted with pleasure.

Ten times he tried to throw her into the water and each time he lost courage.

But suddenly he made up his mind and threw her as far from him as he could. At first she tried to swim, as she did when he gave her a bath, but her head, dragged down by the stone, kept going under, and she looked at her master with wild, human glances as she struggled like a drowning person. Then the front part of her body sank, while her hind legs waved wildly out of the water. Finally those also disappeared.

Then, for five minutes, bubbles rose to the surface

## MADEMOISELLE COCOTTE

as though the river were boiling, and François, haggard, his heart beating, thought that he saw Cocotte struggling in the mud, and, with the simplicity of a peasant, he kept saying to himself: "What does the poor beast think of me now?"

He almost lost his mind. He was ill for a month and every night he dreamed of his dog. He could feel her licking his hands and hear her barking. It was necessary to call in a physician. At last he recovered, and toward the end of June his employers took him to their estate at Biessard, near Rouen.

There again he was near the Seine. He began to take baths. Each morning he would go down with the groom and they would swim across the river.

One day, as they were disporting themselves in the water, François suddenly cried to his companion: "Look what's coming! I'm going to give you a chop!"

It was an enormous, swollen corpse that was floating down with its feet sticking straight up in the air.

François swam up to it, still joking: "Whew! it's not fresh. What a catch, old man! It isn't thin, either!" He kept swimming about at a distance from the animal, that was in a state of decomposition. Then, suddenly, he was silent and looked at it attentively. This time he came near enough to touch it. He looked fixedly at the collar, then he stretched out his arm, seized the neck, swung the corpse round and drew it up close to him and read on the copper, which had turned green and which still stuck to the discolored leather: "Mademoiselle Cocotte, belonging to the coachman François."

## MADEMOISELLE COCOTTE

The dead dog had come more than a hundred miles to find its master!

He let out a frightful shriek and began to swim for the beach with all his might, still howling; and as soon as he touched land he ran away wildly, stark naked, through the country. He was insane!

## DEAD WOMAN'S SECRET

THE woman had died without pain, quietly, as a woman should whose life had been blameless. Now she was resting in her bed, lying on her back, her eyes closed, her features calm, her long white hair carefully arranged as though she had done it up ten minutes before dying. The whole pale countenance of the dead woman was so collected, so calm, so resigned that one could feel what a sweet soul had lived in that body, what a quiet existence this old soul had led, how easy and pure the death of this parent had been.

Kneeling beside the bed, her son, a magistrate with inflexible principles, and her daughter, Marguerite, known as Sister Eulalie, were weeping as though their hearts would break. She had, from childhood up, armed them with a strict moral code, teaching them religion, without weakness, and duty, without compromise. He, the man, had become a judge and handled the law as a weapon with which he smote the weak ones without pity. She, the girl, influenced by the virtue which had bathed her in this austere family, had become the bride of the Church through her loathing for man.

They had hardly known their father, knowing only that he had made their mother most unhappy, without being told any other details.

The nun was wildly kissing the dead woman's

## DEAD WOMAN'S SECRET

hand, an ivory hand as white as the large crucifix lying across the bed. On the other side of the long body the other hand seemed still to be holding the sheet in the death grasp; and the sheet had preserved the little creases as a memory of those last movements which precede eternal immobility.

A few light taps on the door caused the two sobbing heads to look up, and the priest, who had just come from dinner, returned. He was red and out of breath from his interrupted digestion, for he had made himself a strong mixture of coffee and brandy in order to combat the fatigue of the last few nights and of the wake which was beginning.

He looked sad, with that assumed sadness of the priest for whom death is a bread winner. He crossed himself and approaching with his professional gesture: "Well, my poor children! I have come to help you pass these last sad hours." But Sister Eulalie suddenly arose. "Thank you, father, but my brother and I prefer to remain alone with her. This is our last chance to see her, and we wish to be together, all three of us, as we—we—used to be when we were small and our poor mother—" Grief and tears stopped her; she could not continue.

Once more serene, the priest bowed, thinking of his bed. "As you wish, my children." He kneeled, crossed himself, prayed, arose and went out quietly, murmuring: "She was a saint!"

They remained alone, the dead woman and her children. The ticking of the clock, hidden in the shadow, could be heard distinctly, and through the open window drifted in the sweet smell of hay and of woods, together with the soft moonlight. No

## DEAD WOMAN'S SECRET

other noise could be heard over the land except the occasional croaking of the frog or the chirping of some belated insect. An infinite peace, a divine melancholy, a silent serenity surrounded this dead woman, seemed to be breathed out from her and to appease nature itself.

Then the judge, still kneeling, his head buried in the bed clothes, cried in a voice altered by grief and deadened by the sheets and blankets: "Mamma, mamma, mamma!" And his sister, frantically striking her forehead against the woodwork, convulsed, twitching and trembling as in an epileptic fit, moaned: "Jesus, Jesus, mamma, Jesus!" And both of them, shaken by a storm of grief, gasped and choked.

The crisis slowly calmed down and they began to weep quietly, just as on the sea when a calm follows a squall.

A rather long time passed and they arose and looked at their dead. And the memories, those distant memories, yesterday so dear, to-day so torturing, came to their minds with all the little forgotten details, those little intimate familiar details which bring back to life the one who has left. They recalled to each other circumstances, words, smiles, intonations of the mother who was no longer to speak to them. They saw her again happy and calm. They remembered things which she had said, and a little motion of the hand, like beating time, which she often used when emphasizing something important.

And they loved her as they never had loved her before. They measured the depth of their grief,

## DEAD WOMAN'S SECRET

and thus they discovered how lonely they would find themselves.

It was their prop, their guide, their whole youth, all the best part of their lives which was disappearing. It was their bond with life, their mother, their mamma, the connecting link with their forefathers which they would thenceforth miss. They now became solitary, lonely beings; they could no longer look back.

The nun said to her brother: "You remember how mamma used always to read her old letters; they are all there in that drawer. Let us, in turn, read them; let us live her whole life through to-night beside her! It would be like a road to the cross, like making the acquaintance of her mother, of our grandparents, whom we never knew, but whose letters are there and of whom she so often spoke, do you remember?"

Out of the drawer they took about ten little packages of yellow paper, tied with care and arranged one beside the other. They threw these relics on the bed and chose one of them on which the word "Father" was written. They opened and read it.

It was one of those old-fashioned letters which one finds in old family desk drawers, those epistles which smell of another century. The first one started: "My dear," another one: "My beautiful little girl," others: "My dear child," or: "My dear daughter." And suddenly the nun began to read aloud, to read over to the dead woman her whole history, all her tender memories. The judge, resting his elbow on the bed, was listening with his eyes

## DEAD WOMAN'S SECRET

fastened on his mother. The motionless body seemed happy.

Sister Eulalie, interrupting herself, said suddenly: "These ought to be put in the grave with her; they ought to be used as a shroud and she ought to be buried in it." She took another package, on which no name was written. She began to read in a firm voice: "My adored one, I love you wildly. Since yesterday I have been suffering the tortures of the damned, haunted by our memory. I feel your lips against mine, your eyes in mine, your breast against mine. I love you, I love you! You have driven me mad. My arms open, I gasp, moved by a wild desire to hold you again. My whole soul and body cries out for you, wants you. I have kept in my mouth the taste of your kisses—"

The judge had straightened himself up. The nun stopped reading. He snatched the letter from her and looked for the signature. There was none, but only under the words, "The man who adores you," the name "Henry." Their father's name was René. Therefore this was not from him. The son then quickly rummaged through the package of letters, took one out and read: "I can no longer live without your caresses—" Standing erect, severe as when sitting on the bench, he looked unmoved at the dead woman. The nun, straight as a statue, tears trembling in the corners of her eyes, was watching her brother, waiting. Then he crossed the room slowly, went to the window and stood there, gazing out into the dark night.

When he turned around again Sister Eulalie, her eyes dry now, was still standing near the bed, her head bent down.

## DEAD WOMAN'S SECRET

He stepped forward, quickly picked up the letters and threw them pell-mell back into the drawer. Then he closed the curtains of the bed.

When daylight made the candles on the table turn pale the son slowly left his armchair, and without looking again at the mother upon whom he had passed sentence, severing the tie that united her to son and daughter, he said slowly: "Let us now retire, sister."

## DREAD

**T**HE train was racing at full steam through the darkness.

I was sitting alone, opposite an old gentleman who was looking out of the door. There was a strong odor of phenol in this carriage of the P. L. M. which had doubtless come from Marseilles.

It was a suffocating night, without any moon or any breeze. No stars were visible, and the breath puffed out by the train felt hot and damp to the face, like something overpowering and choking.

Having left Paris three hours before, we were going toward the middle of France, without seeing anything of the country we were traversing.

Suddenly we saw a weird apparition: two men in a wood standing by a fire.

The vision lasted only for a second. They seemed to us two miserable, ragged fellows, red in the brilliant light of the fire, with their bearded faces turned toward me, and like a stage setting around them, the trees, shining green, with the bright reflection of the flame playing on their trunks, and the foliage pierced, penetrated and steeped in the light.

Then everything again became black.

This was certainly a very strange vision. What were those two vagabonds doing in that forest? And why that fire in this stifling night?

My neighbor drew out his watch and said:

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"It is exactly midnight, monsieur. We have just seen a very curious thing."

I agreed with him, and we began to talk and to wonder what these men might be: criminals who were burning the proofs of their deed or sorcerers who were preparing a potion? People do not light such a fire at midnight, in the midst of summer, in a forest in order to make soup. What were they doing, then? We could not imagine anything probable.

And my neighbor began to chat. He was an old man, whose profession I could not guess. An original, certainly very well informed, but whose brain was perhaps a little affected.

But do we know who are sages and who are fools in this life where reason should sometimes be called foolishness and folly should be called genius?

"I am glad to have seen this," he said. "For a few moments I have experienced a sensation that has now left me. How troublous the earth must have been formerly when it was so mysterious.

"In proportion as the veil of the unknown is lifted man's imagination is unpeopled. You think, monsieur, do you not, that the night is empty and of a commonplace blackness, since it no longer holds any apparitions?

"People say: 'There is no longer anything phantasmic, any belief in strange phenomena; all that was unexplained is now explicable. The supernatural is done away with, like a lake that is drained by a canal. Science narrows the limits of the marvelous from day to day.'

"Very well, monsieur. I belong to the older race, which likes to believe. I belong to the simple, older

## DREAD

race, which is not accustomed to understand, to search out, to know; the race made to believe in surrounding mysteries, which refuses the simple and clear-cut truth.

"Yes, monsieur, they unpeople the imagination in suppressing the invisible. Our earth appears to me always like an abandoned, empty and naked world. The beliefs that once made it poetic are gone.

"When I go out at night, how I should like to shiver with that fear which makes old women cross themselves as they pass the walls of cemeteries and makes the superstitious flee from the strange exhalations of the marshes and the fantastic will-o'-the-wisps! How I should like to believe in this something vague and terrifying that one imagines to be passing through the shadows!

"How the darkness of the evenings of old must have been sombre and terrible, when it was full of unknown, fabulous beings, wicked creatures whose shapes one could not divine, but in imagining whose forms the heart turned cold; whose hidden powers passed the limits of our imagination and whose maleficence was inevitable!

"With the disappearance of the supernatural, true fear has also disappeared from the earth, for in reality one fears only that which one does not understand. Visible dangers may move, trouble and frighten us. But what is that compared with the convulsion of soul occasioned by the thought that one is about to meet a roaming spectre, that one will feel the embrace of a corpse, that one of these frightful creatures invented by the fear of man will

## DREAD

come upon one? Darkness seems to me clear as daylight, since it is no longer haunted.

"And the proof of all this is that if we were to find ourselves suddenly alone in these woods we should be pursued by the image of those two singular beings who have just appeared to us in the gleam of their fire much more truly than by the apprehension of any real danger.

"One really fears only that which one does not understand," he repeated.

And suddenly something came into my mind, and I remembered a story that Turgénieff told one Sunday at the house of Gustave Flaubert.

Has he written it anywhere? I don't know.

No one ever understood better than that great Russian romancer how to awaken in the soul that shiver at the veiled unknown, revealing in the semi-ambiguity of a strange tale a whole world of disquieting, uncertain, menacing things.

In reading him one feels this vague dread of the invisible, of the unknown behind the wall, behind the door, behind the life of phenomena. We are abruptly confronted with doubtful explanations, which illumine our mind only enough to increase our fear.

Sometimes he seems to show to us the significance of strange coincidences, of the unexpected connection between apparently fortuitous circumstances, which seem the work of a hidden and cunning will. He makes us feel an imperceptible thread, which guides us in a mysterious fashion through life, as through a hazy dream the meaning of which is ever escaping us.

He does not penetrate boldly into the supernatural

## DREAD

as does Edgar Poe or Hoffmann, but he tells simple stories that are tinged with something vague and disturbing.

He also said to us that day: "One is afraid only of that which one does not understand."

He was sitting, or, rather, reclining, in a large easy-chair, with his hands hanging and his legs lazily outstretched; his white head, covered with that mass of silvery hair and beard, made him look like a Father Eternal or like one of the river-gods of Ovid.

He spoke slowly, with a certain laziness, which lent a charm to his words, and with a certain heaviness and hesitancy of speech which emphasized the justness of his words. His pale, wide-open eyes reflected all the emotions of his soul, as does the eye of a child.

He told us the following story:

He was once hunting, as a young man, in a forest in Russia. After walking all day, toward the end of the afternoon he arrived at the bank of a calm river.

It flowed among the trees, was full of floating grasses and was deep, cold and clear.

An irresistible desire seized the traveller to fling himself into that transparent water, and he undressed and jumped into the stream. He was a large and strong young fellow, a vigorous and daring swimmer.

He floated along lazily, with tranquil soul, the grasses and reeds touching him, and he was glad to feel the light contact of the water reeds against his skin.

Suddenly a hand was laid on his shoulder.

Turning around, startled, he beheld a frightful

## DREAD

being looking greedily at him. It was like a woman or a she-monkey. She was laughing at him with an enormous, wrinkled, grimacing face. Two unnamable things—her breasts, no doubt—floated before her, and a shock of tangled hair, reddened by the sun, hung around her face and fell down her back.

Turgénieff was seized with the hideous, icy dread of supernatural things.

Without pausing, without reflecting, without understanding, he strained every muscle to get to the shore. But the monster swam still faster, touching his neck, his back, his legs with little chuckles of laughter. The young man, crazed with fear, finally reached the bank and began to run with all his legs through the woods, without even thinking of gathering up his clothes or his gun.

At the end of his strength, and paralyzed with fear, he was about to drop, when a boy guarding some goats came up with a whip and began to beat the frightful human beast, who ran off with cries of pain. Turgénieff saw her disappear behind the trees like a female gorilla.

It was a madwoman, who had been living for more than thirty years in those woods, on the charity of the shepherds, and who passed half her days swimming in the river.

"I never was so frightened in my life," the great Russian concluded, "because I did not understand what sort of monster this might be."

My companion, to whom I related this adventure, replied:

"Yes, one is afraid only of that which one does not understand. One really feels that dreadful convulsion of the soul which is called dread only when

## DREAD

fear is somewhat blended with the superstitious terror of bygone centuries. I myself have felt this dread in all its horror and in consequence of something so simple and foolish that I hardly dare speak of it.

"I was travelling in Brittany, all alone and on foot. I had gone through Finistère, that desolate land, that naked land where nothing grows but gorse among the large sacred stones—stones that are haunted. On the day before I had visited the dangerous promontory of Raz, that final point of the Old World, where two oceans are eternally at war, the Atlantic and the Channel; and my head was full of legends and stories that I had read or heard in that country of romance and superstition.

"I was walking from Penmarch to Pont-l'Abbé at night. Do you know Penmarch? It is a flat coast, which almost seems below the level of the sea. Everywhere one sees the gray and menacing sea, full of foam-covered rocks, that look like infuriated animals.

"I had dined at a fisherman's inn and was walking along the highway between two plains. It was very dark.

"From time to time a druidic stone seemed to look at me, like a phantom watching me pass, and little by little a vague apprehension took possession of me. Apprehension of what? I did not know. There are evenings when one feels as if touched by spirits, when the soul shudders without reason and the heart beats with the confused fear of something invisible, the disappearance of which I regret.

"The route seemed to be interminably long and deserted.

## DREAD

"No noise could be heard but the moaning of the waves behind me, and at times that monotonous and menacing noise seemed so near that I thought they were at my heels, overrunning the plain with their foamy lips, so that I longed to escape at full speed from their pursuit.

"The low wind, coming in gusts, was caught in a whisper by the broom around me. And, although I was walking very fast, I felt cold in my arms and legs; it was the terrible shiver of dread.

"I would have given anything to meet some one.

"It became so dark that at length I could hardly see my way.

"Suddenly I heard in front of me, far off, a rumbling. A wagon, I thought. Then for a moment I heard nothing further.

"A minute later I distinctly heard the same noise, but nearer.

"I saw no light, and I said to myself: They have no lantern; that is astonishing in this wild country.

"The noise stopped and then began again. It was too slight for a cart; besides, I did not hear the sound of any horse's hoof, which astonished me, since the night was still.

"I asked myself what it could be.

"It was approaching very fast now. I certainly heard nothing but a wheel, no sound of hoofs or of feet—nothing. What could it be?

"It was very near now, and by an instinctive movement of fear I flung myself into the ditch by the road, and I saw passing by me a push-cart which rolled all alone—no one was pushing it! Yes, a push-cart—all alone!

"My heart beat so violently that I sank limp into

## DREAD

the grass, and I heard the rolling of the wheels, going toward the sea. I did not dare to get up, nor to make a movement, nor to walk, for had it come back, had it pursued me, I should have died of fright.

"It took me a long time to pull myself together, and I continued with such anguish of soul that the least noise took away my breath.

"Tell me, was not that stupid? But what a fright! In thinking it over later, I understood; that cart was no doubt pushed by a barefoot boy, and I was looking for a man's head at the ordinary height.

"Do you understand that—when one's mind is already filled with the shudder of the supernatural—a push-cart which rolls—all by itself. What a frightful thing!"

He paused for a second and then resumed:

"You see, monsieur, we are in the presence of a curious and terrible event; I mean the invasion of the cholera. You smell the odor of phenol with which these carriages are filled? It is somewhere about.

"You should see Toulon at this moment. Well, one feels that it is there—It. It is not the dread of a disease that is driving these people crazy. The cholera—that is a different matter; it is the invisible scourge of bygone times, a kind of evil spirit, revisiting us, which surprises as much as it frightens us, for it seems to belong to the ages that have disappeared.

"The doctors make me laugh, with their microbes. It is not a germ that terrifies men so that they are likely to jump out of the window, but the cholera—

## DREAD

the inexpressible and grisly phantom that has come out of the depths of the East.

"Go through Toulon. People are dancing in the street.

"Why dance in these days of death? Fireworks are set off in the country outside of the city; the people make bonfires; bands are playing joyful music on all the public promenades.

"Why this madness?

"Because It is there and they brave It—not the Microbes, but the Cholera, and they wish to appear devilish clever before it, as before an enemy who is watching them. It is on Its account that they dance, and laugh, and cry, and light these fires, and play those waltzes—for It, the demon that kills, that one feels everywhere present, invisible, menacing, like one of those evil geniuses of old, against whom the priests of antiquity mumbled their incantations."

## HIS AVENGER

**W**HEN M. Antoine Leuillet married the widow, Madame Mathilde Souris, he had already been in love with her for ten years.

M. Souris has been his friend, his old college chum. Leuillet was very much attached to him, but thought he was somewhat of a simpleton. He would often remark: "That poor Souris who will never set the world on fire."

When Souris married Miss Mathilde Duval, Leuillet was astonished and somewhat annoyed, as he was slightly devoted to her, himself. She was the daughter of a neighbor, a former proprietor of a draper's establishment who had retired with quite a small fortune. She married Souris for his money.

Then Leuillet thought he would start a flirtation with his friend's wife. He was a good-looking man, intelligent and also rich. He thought it would be all plain sailing, but he was mistaken. Then he really began to admire her with an admiration that his friendship for the husband obliged him to keep within the bounds of discretion, making him timid and embarrassed. Madame Souris believing that his presumptions had received a wholesome check now treated him as a good friend. This went on for nine years.

One morning a messenger brought Leuillet a distracted note from the poor woman. Souris had just died suddenly from the rupture of an aneurism.

## HIS AVENGER

He was dreadfully shocked, for they were just the same age. But almost immediately a feeling of profound joy, of intense relief, of emanicipation filled his being. Madame Souris was free.

He managed, however, to assume the sad, sympathetic expression that was appropriate, waited the required time, observed all social appearances. At the end of fifteen months he married the widow.

This was considered to be a very natural, and even a generous action. It was the act of a good friend of an upright man.

He was happy at last, perfectly happy.

They lived in the most cordial intimacy, having understood and appreciated each other from the first. They had no secrets from one another and even confided to each other their most secret thoughts. Leuillet loved his wife now with a quiet and trustful affection; he loved her as a tender, devoted companion who is an equal and a confidante. But there lingered in his mind a strange and inexplicable bitterness towards the defunct Souris, who had first been the husband of this woman, who had had the flower of her youth and of her soul, and had even robbed her of some of her poetry. The memory of the dead husband marred the happiness of the living husband, and this posthumous jealousy tormented his heart by day and by night.

The consequence was he talked incessantly of Souris, asked about a thousand personal and secret minutiae, wanted to know all about his habits and his person. And he sneered at him even in his grave, recalling with self-satisfaction his whims, ridiculing his absurdities, dwelling on his faults.

He would call to his wife all over the house:

## HIS AVENGER

"Hallo, Mathilde!"

"Here I am, dear."

"Come here a moment."

She would come, always smiling, knowing well that he would say something about Souris and ready to flatter her new husband's inoffensive mania.

"Tell me, do you remember one day how Souris insisted on explaining to me that little men always commanded more affection than big men?"

And he made some remarks that were disparaging to the deceased, who was a small man, and decidedly flattering to himself, Leuillet, who was a tall man.

Mme. Leuillet allowed him to think he was right, quite right, and she laughed heartily, gently ridiculing her former husband for the sake of pleasing the present one, who always ended by saying:

"All the same, what a ninny that Souris was!"

They were happy, quite happy, and Leuillet never ceased to show his devotion to his wife.

One night, however, as they lay awake, Leuillet said as he kissed his wife:

"See here, dearie."

"Well?"

"Was Souris—I don't exactly know how to say it—was Souris very loving?"

She gave him a kiss for reply and murmured: "Not as loving as you are, *mon chat*."

He was flattered in his self-love and continued:

"He must have been—a ninny—was he not?"

She did not reply. She only smiled slyly and hid her face in her husband's neck.

"He must have been a ninny and not—not—not smart?"

## HIS AVENGER

She shook her head slightly to imply, "No—not at all smart."

He continued:

"He must have been an awful nuisance, eh?"

This time she was frank and replied:

"Oh yes!"

He kissed her again for this avowal and said: "What a brute he was! You were not happy with him?"

"No," she replied. "It was not always pleasant."

Leuillet was delighted, forming in his mind a comparison, much in his own favor, between his wife's former and present position. He was silent for a time, and then with a burst of laughter he asked:

"Tell me?"

"What?"

"Will you be frank, very frank with me?"

"Why yes, my dear."

"Well then, tell me truly did you never feel tempted to—to—to deceive that imbecile Souris?"

Mme. Leuillet said: "Oh!" pretending to be shocked and hid her face again on her husband's shoulder. But he saw that she was laughing.

"Come now, own up," he persisted. "He looked like a ninny, that creature! It would be funny, so funny! Good old Souris! Come, come, dearie, you do not mind telling me, me, of all people."

He insisted on the "me" thinking that if she had wished to deceive Souris she would have chosen him, and he was trembling in anticipation of her avowal, sure that if she had not been a virtuous woman she would have encouraged his own attentions.

## HIS AVENGER

But she did not answer, laughing still, as at the recollection of something exceedingly comical.

Leuillet, in his turn began to laugh, thinking he might have been the lucky man, and he muttered amid his mirth: "That poor Souris, that poor Souris, oh, yes, he looked like a fool!"

Mme. Leuillet was almost in spasms of laughter.

"Come, confess, be frank. You know I will not mind."

Then she stammered out, almost choking with laughter: "Yes, yes."

"Yes, what?" insisted her husband. "Come, tell all."

She was quieter now and putting her mouth to her husband's ear, she whispered: "Yes, I did deceive him."

He felt a chill run down his back and to his very bones, and he stammered out, dumfounded: "You—you—deceived him—criminally?"

She still thought he was amused and replied: "Yes—yes, absolutely."

He was obliged to sit up to recover his breath, he was so shocked and upset at what he had heard.

She had become serious, understanding too late what she had done.

"With whom?" said Leuillet at length.

She was silent seeking some excuse.

"A young man," she replied at length.

He turned suddenly toward her and said drily: "I did not suppose it was the cook. I want to know what young man, do you hear?"

She did not answer.

He snatched the covers from her face, repeating: "I want to know what young man, do you hear?"

## HIS AVENGER

Then she said sorrowfully: "I was only in fun."

But he was trembling with rage. "What? How? You were only in fun? You were making fun of me, then? But I am not satisfied, do you hear? I want the name of the young man!"

She did not reply, but lay there motionless.

He took her by the arm and squeezed it, saying: "Do you understand me, finally? I wish you to reply when I speak to you."

"I think you are going crazy," she said nervously, "let me alone!"

He was wild with rage, not knowing what to say, exasperated, and he shook her with all his might, repeating:

"Do you hear me, do you hear me?"

She made an abrupt effort to disengage herself and the tips of her fingers touched her husband's nose. He was furious, thinking she had tried to hit him, and he sprang upon her holding her down; and boxing her ears with all his might, he cried: "Take that, and that, there, there, wretch!"

When he was out of breath and exhausted, he rose and went toward the dressing table to prepare a glass of eau sucrée with orange flower, for he felt as if he should faint.

She was weeping in bed, sobbing bitterly, for she felt as if her happiness was over, through her own fault.

Then, amidst her tears, she stammered out: "Listen, Antoine, come here, I told you a lie, you will understand, listen."

And prepared to defend herself now, armed with excuses and artifice, she raised her disheveled head with its nightcap all awry.

## HIS AVENGER

Turning toward her, he approached, ashamed of having struck her, but feeling in the bottom of his heart as a husband, a relentless hatred toward this woman who had deceived the former husband, Souris.

## THE DISPENSER OF HOLY WATER

WE lived formerly in a little house beside the high road outside the village. He had set up in business as a wheelwright, after marrying the daughter of a farmer of the neighborhood, and as they were both industrious, they managed to save up a nice little fortune. But they had no children, and this caused them great sorrow. Finally a son was born, whom they named Jean. They both loved and petted him, enfolding him with their affection, and were unwilling to let him be out of their sight.

When he was five years old some mountebanks passed through the country and set up their tent in the town hall square.

Jean, who had seen them pass by, made his escape from the house, and after his father had made a long search for him, he found him among the learned goats and trick dogs, uttering shouts of laughter and sitting on the knees of an old clown.

Three days later, just as they were sitting down to dinner, the wheelwright and his wife noticed that their son was not in the house. They looked for him in the garden, and as they did not find him, his father went out into the road and shouted at the top of his voice, "Jean!"

## THE DISPENSER OF HOLY WATER

Night came on. A brown vapor arose, making distant objects look still farther away and giving them a dismal, weird appearance. Three tall pines, close at hand, seemed to be weeping. Still there was no reply, but the air appeared to be full of indistinct sighing. The father listened for some time, thinking he heard a sound first in one direction, then in another, and, almost beside himself, he ran out into the night, calling incessantly "Jean! Jean!"

He ran along thus until daybreak, filling the darkness with his shouts, terrifying stray animals, torn by a terrible anguish and fearing that he was losing his mind. His wife, seated on the stone step of their home, sobbed until morning.

They did not find their son. They both aged rapidly in their inconsolable sorrow. Finally they sold their house and set out to search together.

They inquired of the shepherds on the hillsides, of the tradesmen passing by, of the peasants in the villages and of the authorities in the towns. But their boy had been lost a long time and no one knew anything about him. He had probably forgotten his own name by this time and also the name of his village, and his parents wept in silence, having lost hope.

Before long their money came to an end, and they worked out by the day in the farms and inns, doing the most menial work, eating what was left from the tables, sleeping on the ground and suffering from cold. Then as they became enfeebled by hard work no one would employ them any longer, and they were forced to beg along the high roads. They accosted passersby in an entreating voice and with sad, discouraged faces; they begged a morsel of bread from

## THE DISPENSER OF HOLY WATER

the harvesters who were dining around a tree in the fields at noon, and they ate in silence seated on the edge of a ditch.

An innkeeper to whom they told their story said to them one day:

"I know some one who had lost their daughter, and they found her in Paris."

They at once set out for Paris.

When they entered the great city they were bewildered by its size and by the crowds that they saw. But they knew that Jean must be in the midst of all these people, though they did not know how to set about looking for him. Then they feared that they might not recognize him, for he was only five years old when they last saw him.

They visited every place, went through all the streets, stopping whenever they saw a group of people, hoping for some providential meeting, some extraordinary luck, some compassionate fate.

They frequently walked at haphazard straight ahead, leaning one against the other, looking so sad and poverty-stricken that people would give them alms without their asking.

They spent every Sunday at the doors of the churches, watching the crowds entering and leaving, trying to distinguish among the faces one that might be familiar. Several times they thought they recognized him, but always found they had made a mistake.

In the vestibule of one of the churches which they visited the most frequently there was an old dispenser of holy water who had become their friend. He also had a very sad history, and their sympathy for him had established a bond of close friendship

## THE DISPENSER OF HOLY WATER

between them. It ended by them all three living together in a poor lodging on the top floor of a large house situated at some distance, quite on the outskirts of the city, and the wheelwright would sometimes take his new friend's place at the church when the latter was ill.

Winter came, a very severe winter. The poor holy water sprinkler died and the parish priest appointed the wheelwright, whose misfortunes had come to his knowledge, to replace him. He went every morning and sat in the same place, on the same chair, wearing away the old stone pillar by continually leaning against it. He would gaze steadily at every man who entered the church and looked forward to Sunday with as much impatience as a schoolboy, for on that day the church was filled with people from morning till night.

He became very old, growing weaker each day from the dampness of the church, and his hope oozed away gradually.

He now knew by sight all the people who came to the services; he knew their hours, their manners, could distinguish their step on the stone pavement.

His interests had become so contracted that the entrance of a stranger in the church was for him a great event. One day two ladies came in; one was old, the other young—a mother and daughter probably. Behind them came a man who was following them. He bowed to them as they came out, and after offering them some holy water, he took the arm of the elder lady.

"That must be the fiancé of the younger one," thought the wheelwright. And until evening he kept trying to recall where he had formerly seen a young

## THE DISPENSER OF HOLY WATER

man who resembled this one. But the one he was thinking of must be an old man by this time, for it seemed as if he had known him down home in his youth.

The same man frequently came again to walk home with the ladies, and this vague, distant, familiar resemblance which he could not place worried the old man so much that he made his wife come with him to see if she could help his impaired memory.

One evening as it was growing dusk the three strangers entered together. When they had passed the old man said:

"Well, do you know him?"

His wife anxiously tried to ransack her memory. Suddenly she said in a low tone:

"Yes—yes—but he is darker, taller, stouter and is dressed like a gentleman, but, father, all the same, it is your face when you were young!"

The old man started violently.

It was true. He looked like himself and also like his brother who was dead, and like his father, whom he remembered while he was yet young. The old couple were so affected that they could not speak. The three persons came out and were about to leave the church.

The man touched his finger to the holy water sprinkler. Then the old man, whose hand was trembling so that he was fairly sprinkling the ground with holy water, exclaimed:

"Jean!"

The young man stopped and looked at him.

He repeated in a lower tone:

"Jean!"

## THE DISPENSER OF HOLY WATER

The two women looked at them without understanding.

He then said for the third time, sobbing as he did so:

"Jean!"

The man stooped down, with his face close to the old man's, and as a memory of his childhood dawned on him he replied:

"Papa Pierre, Mamma Jeanne!"

He had forgotten everything, his father's surname and the name of his native place, but he always remembered those two words that he had so often repeated: "Papa Pierre, Mamma Jeanne."

He sank to the floor, his face on the old man's knees, and he wept, kissing now his father and then his mother, while they were almost breathless from intense joy.

The two ladies also wept, understanding as they did that some great happiness had come to pass.

Then they all went to the young man's house and he told them his history.

The circus people had carried him off. For three years he traveled with them in various countries. Then the troupe disbanded, and one day an old lady in a château had paid to have him stay with her because she liked his appearance. As he was intelligent, he was sent to school, then to college, and the old lady having no children, had left him all her money. He, for his part, had tried to find his parents, but as he could remember only the two names, "Papa Pierre, Mamma Jeanne," he had been unable to do so. Now he was about to be married, and he introduced his fiancée, who was very good and very pretty.

## THE DISPENSER OF HOLY WATER

When the two old people had told their story in their turn he kissed them once more. They sat up very late that night, not daring to retire lest the happiness they had so long sought should escape them again while they were asleep.

But misfortune had lost its hold on them and they were happy for the rest of their lives.

## LIEUTENANT LARÉ'S MARRIAGE

SINCE the beginning of the campaign Lieutenant Laré had taken two cannon from the Prussians. His general had said: "Thank you, lieutenant," and had given him the cross of honor.

As he was as cautious as he was brave, wary, inventive, wily and resourceful, he was entrusted with a hundred soldiers and he organized a company of scouts who saved the army on several occasions during a retreat.

But the invading army entered by every frontier like a surging sea. Great waves of men arrived one after the other, scattering all around them a scum of freebooters. General Carrel's brigade, separated from its division, retreated continually, fighting each day, but remaining almost intact, thanks to the vigilance and agility of Lieutenant Laré, who seemed to be everywhere at the same moment, baffling all the enemy's cunning, frustrating their plans, misleading their Uhlans and killing their vanguards.

One morning the general sent for him.

"Lieutenant," said he, "here is a dispatch from General de Lacère, who will be destroyed if we do not go to his aid by sunrise to-morrow. He is at Blainville, eight leagues from here. You will

## LIEUTENANT LARE'S MARRIAGE

start at nightfall with three hundred men, whom you will echelon along the road. I will follow you two hours later. Study the road carefully; I fear we may meet a division of the enemy."

It had been freezing hard for a week. At two o'clock it began to snow, and by night the ground was covered and heavy white swirls concealed objects hard by.

At six o'clock the detachment set out.

Two men walked alone as scouts about three yards ahead. Then came a platoon of ten men commanded by the lieutenant himself. The rest followed them in two long columns. To the right and left of the little band, at a distance of about three hundred feet on either side, some soldiers marched in pairs.

The snow, which was still falling, covered them with a white powder in the darkness, and as it did not melt on their uniforms, they were hardly distinguishable in the night amid the dead whiteness of the landscape.

From time to time they halted. One heard nothing but that indescribable, nameless flutter of falling snow—a sensation rather than a sound, a vague, ominous murmur. A command was given in a low tone and when the troop resumed its march it left in its wake a sort of white phantom standing in the snow. It gradually grew fainter and finally disappeared. It was the echelons who were to lead the army.

The scouts slackened their pace. Something was ahead of them.

"Turn to the right," said the lieutenant; "it is the Ronfi wood; the château is more to the left."

## LIEUTENANT LARE'S MARRIAGE

Presently the command "Halt" was passed along. The detachment stopped and waited for the lieutenant, who, accompanied by only ten men, had undertaken a reconnoitering expedition to the château.

They advanced, creeping under the trees. Suddenly they all remained motionless. Around them was a dead silence. Then, quite near them, a little clear, musical young voice was heard amid the stillness of the wood.

"Father, we shall get lost in the snow. We shall never reach Blainville."

A deeper voice replied:

"Never fear, little daughter; I know the country as well as I know my pocket."

The lieutenant said a few words and four men moved away silently, like shadows.

All at once a woman's shrill cry was heard through the darkness. Two prisoners were brought back, an old man and a young girl. The lieutenant questioned them, still in a low tone:

"Your name?"

"Pierre Bernard."

"Your profession?"

"Butler to Comte de Ronfi."

"Is this your daughter?"

"Yes."

"What does she do?"

"She is laundress at the château."

"Where are you going?"

"We are making our escape."

"Why?"

"Twelve Uhlans passed by this evening. They

## LIEUTENANT LARE'S MARRIAGE

shot three keepers and hanged the gardener. I was alarmed on account of the little one."

"Whither are you bound?"

"To Blainville."

"Why?"

"Because there is a French army there."

"Do you know the way?"

"Perfectly."

"Well then, follow us."

They rejoined the column and resumed their march across country. The old man walked in silence beside the lieutenant, his daughter walking at his side. All at once she stopped.

"Father," she said, "I am so tired I cannot go any farther."

And she sat down. She was shaking with cold and seemed about to lose consciousness. Her father wanted to carry her, but he was too old and too weak.

"Lieutenant," said he, sobbing, "we shall only impede your march. France before all. Leave us here."

The officer had given a command. Some men had started off. They came back with branches they had cut, and in a minute a litter was ready. The whole detachment had joined them by this time.

"Here is a woman dying of cold," said the lieutenant. "Who will give his cape to cover her?"

Two hundred capes were taken off. The young girl was wrapped up in these warm soldiers' capes, gently laid in the litter, and then four hardy shoulders lifted her up, and like an Eastern queen borne by her slaves she was placed in the center of the detachment of soldiers, who resumed their march

## LIEUTENANT LARE'S MARRIAGE

with more energy, more courage, more cheerfulness, animated by the presence of a woman, that sovereign inspiration that has stirred the old French blood to so many deeds of valor.

At the end of an hour they halted again and every one lay down in the snow. Over yonder on the level country a big, dark shadow was moving. It looked like some weird monster stretching itself out like a serpent, then suddenly coiling itself into a mass, darting forth again, then back, and then forward again without ceasing. Some whispered orders were passed around among the soldiers, and an occasional little, dry, metallic click was heard. The moving object suddenly came nearer, and twelve Uhlans were seen approaching at a gallop, one behind the other, having lost their way in the darkness. A brilliant flash suddenly revealed to them two hundred men lying on the ground before them. A rapid fire was heard, which died away in the snowy silence, and all the twelve fell to the ground, their horses with them.

After a long rest the march was resumed. The old man whom they had captured acted as guide.

Presently a voice far off in the distance cried out: "Who goes there?"

Another voice nearer by gave the countersign.

They made another halt; some conferences took place. It had stopped snowing. A cold wind was driving the clouds, and innumerable stars were sparkling in the sky behind them, gradually paling in the rosy light of dawn.

A staff officer came forward to receive the detachment. But when he asked who was being carried in the litter, the form stirred; two little hands

## LIEUTENANT LARE'S MARRIAGE

moved aside the big blue army capes and, rosy as the dawn, with two eyes that were brighter than the stars that had just faded from sight, and a smile as radiant as the morn, a dainty face appeared.

"It is I, monsieur."

The soldiers, wild with delight, clapped their hands and bore the young girl in triumph into the midst of the camp, that was just getting to arms. Presently General Carrel arrived on the scene. At nine o'clock the Prussians made an attack. They beat a retreat at noon.

That evening, as Lieutenant Laré, overcome by fatigue, was sleeping on a bundle of straw, he was sent for by the general. He found the commanding officer in his tent, chatting with the old man whom they had come across during the night. As soon as he entered the tent the general took his hand, and addressing the stranger, said:

"My dear comte, this is the young man of whom you were telling me just now; he is one of my best officers."

He smiled, lowered his tone, and added:

"The best."

Then, turning to the astonished lieutenant, he presented "Comte de Ronfi-Quédissac."

The old man took both his hands, saying:

"My dear lieutenant, you have saved my daughter's life. I have only one way of thanking you. You may come in a few months to tell me—if you like her."

One year later, on the very same day, Captain Laré and Miss Louise-Hortense-Geneviève de Ronfi-

## LIEUTENANT LARE'S MARRIAGE

Quédissac were married in the church of St. Thomas Aquinas.

She brought a dowry of six thousand francs, and was said to be the prettiest bride that had been seen that year.

## THE PATRON

WE never dreamed of such good fortune! The son of a provincial bailiff, Jean Marin had come, as do so many others, to study law in the Quartier Latin. In the various beer-houses that he had frequented he had made friends with several talkative students who spouted politics as they drank their beer. He had a great admiration for them and followed them persistently from café to café, even paying for their drinks when he had the money.

He became a lawyer and pleaded causes, which he lost. However, one morning he read in the papers that one of his former comrades of the Quartier had just been appointed deputy.

He again became his faithful hound, the friend who does the drudgery, the unpleasant tasks, for whom one sends when one has need of him and with whom one does not stand on ceremony. But it chanced through some parliamentary incident that the deputy became a minister. Six months later Jean Marin was appointed a state councillor.

He was so elated with pride at first that he lost his head. He would walk through the streets just to show himself off, as though one could tell by his appearance what position he occupied. He managed to say to the shopkeepers as soon as he entered a store, bringing it in somehow in the course of the most insignificant remarks and even to the news vendors and the cabmen:

## THE PATRON

"I, who am a state councillor——"

Then, in consequence of his position as well as for professional reasons and as in duty bound through being an influential and generous man, he felt an imperious need of patronizing others. He offered his support to every one on all occasions and with unbounded generosity.

When he met any one he recognized on the boulevards he would advance to meet them with a charmed air, would take their hand, inquire after their health, and, without waiting for any questions, remark:

"You know I am state councillor, and I am entirely at your service. If I can be of any use to you, do not hesitate to call on me. In my position one has great influence."

Then he would go into some café with the friend he had just met and ask for a pen and ink and a sheet of paper. "Just one, waiter; it is to write a letter of recommendation."

And he wrote ten, twenty, fifty letters of recommendation a day. He wrote them to the Café Américain, to Bignon's, to Tortoni's, to the Maison Dorée, to the Café Riche, to the Helder, to the Café Anglais, to the Napolitain, everywhere, everywhere. He wrote them to all the officials of the republican government, from the magistrates to the ministers. And he was happy, perfectly happy.

One morning as he was starting out to go to the council it began to rain. He hesitated about taking a cab, but decided not to do so and set out on foot.

The rain came down in torrents, swamping the sidewalks and inundating the streets. M. Marin was obliged to take shelter in a doorway. An old priest

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was standing there—an old priest with white hair. Before he became a councillor M. Marin did not like the clergy. Now he treated them with consideration, ever since a cardinal had consulted him on an important matter. The rain continued to pour down in floods and obliged the two men to take shelter in the porter's lodge so as to avoid getting wet. M. Marin, who was always itching to talk so as to let people know who he was, remarked:

"This is horrible weather, Monsieur l'Abbé."

The old priest bowed.

"Yes indeed, sir, it is very unpleasant when one comes to Paris for only a few days."

"Ah! You come from the provinces?"

"Yes, monsieur. I am only passing through on my journey."

"It certainly is very disagreeable to have rain during the few days one spends in the capital. We officials who stay here the year round, we think nothing of it."

The priest did not reply. He was looking at the street where the rain seemed to be falling less heavily. And with a sudden resolve he raised his cassock just as women raise their skirts in stepping across water.

M. Marin, seeing him start away, exclaimed:

"You will get drenched, Monsieur l'Abbé. Wait a few moments longer; the rain will be over."

The good man stopped irresistibly and then said:

"But I am in a great hurry. I have an important engagement."

M. Marin seemed quite worried.

"But you will be absolutely drenched. Might I ask in which direction you are going?"

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The priest appeared to hesitate. Then he said:  
“I am going in the direction of the Palais Royal.”

“In that case, if you will allow me, Monsieur l’Abbé, I will offer you the shelter of my umbrella. As for me, I am going to the council. I am a counsellor of state.”

The old priest raised his head and looked at his neighbor and then exclaimed:

“I thank you, monsieur. I shall be glad to accept your offer.”

M. Marin then took his arm and led him away. He directed him, watched over him and advised him.

“Be careful of that stream, Monsieur l’Abbé. And be very careful about the carriage wheels; they spatter you with mud sometimes from head to foot. Look out for the umbrellas of the people passing by; there is nothing more dangerous to the eyes than the tips of the ribs. Women especially are unbearable; they pay no heed to where they are going and always jab you in the face with the point of their parasols or umbrellas. And they never move aside for anybody. One would suppose the town belonged to them. They monopolize the pavement and the street. It is my opinion that their education has been greatly neglected.”

And M. Marin laughed.

The priest did not reply. He walked along, slightly bent over, picking his steps carefully so as not to get mud on his boots or his cassock.

M. Marin resumed:

“I suppose you have come to Paris to divert your mind a little?”

The good man replied:

“No, I have some business to attend to.”

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"Ah! Is it important business? Might I venture to ask what it is? If I can be of any service to you, you may command me."

The priest seemed embarrassed. He murmured:

"Oh, it is a little personal matter; a little difficulty with—with my bishop. It would not interest you. It is a matter of internal regulation—an ecclesiastical affair."

M. Marin was eager.

"But it is precisely the state council that regulates all those things. In that case, make use of me."

"Yes, monsieur, it is to the council that I am going. You are a thousand times too kind. I have to see M. Lerepère and M. Savon and also perhaps M. Petitpas."

M. Marin stopped short.

"Why, those are my friends, Monsieur l'Abbé, my best friends, excellent colleagues, charming men. I will speak to them about you, and very highly. Count upon me."

The curé thanked him, apologizing for troubling him, and stammered out a thousand grateful promises.

M. Marin was enchanted.

"Ah, you may be proud of having made a stroke of luck, Monsieur l'Abbé. You will see—you will see that, thanks to me, your affair will go along swimmingly."

They reached the council hall. M. Marin took the priest into his office, offered him a chair in front of the fire and sat down himself at his desk and began to write.

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"My dear colleague, allow me to recommend to you most highly a venerable and particularly worthy and deserving priest, M. l'Abbé——"

He stopped and asked:  
"Your name, if you please?"  
"L'Abbé Ceinture."

"M. l'Abbé Ceinture, who needs your good offices in a little matter which he will communicate to you.

"I am pleased at this incident which gives me an opportunity, my dear colleague——"

And he finished with the usual compliments.

When he had written the three letters he handed them to his protégé, who took his departure with many protestations of gratitude.

M. Marin attended to some business and then went home, passed the day quietly, slept well, woke in a good humor and sent for his newspapers.

The first he opened was a radical sheet. He read:

### "OUR CLERGY AND OUR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

"We shall never make an end of enumerating the misdeeds of the clergy. A certain priest, named Ceinture, convicted of conspiracy against the present government, accused of base actions to which we will not even allude, suspected besides of being a former Jesuit, metamorphosed into a simple priest, suspended by a bishop for causes that are said to be unmentionable and summoned to Paris to give an explanation of his conduct, has found an ardent defender in the man named Marin, a councillor of

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state, who was not afraid to give this frocked malefactor the warmest letters of recommendation to all the republican officials, his colleagues.

"We call the attention of the ministry to the unheard of attitude of this councillor of state—"

M. Marin bounded out of bed, dressed himself and hastened to his colleague, Petitpas, who said to him:

"How now? You were crazy to recommend to me that old conspirator!"

M. Marin, bewildered, stammered out:

"Why no—you see—I was deceived. He looked such an honest man. He played me a trick—a disgraceful trick! I beg that you will sentence him severely, very severely. I am going to write. Tell me to whom I should write about having him punished. I will go and see the attorney-general and the archbishop of Paris—yes, the archbishop."

And seating himself abruptly at M. Petitpas' desk, he wrote:

"Monseigneur, I have the honor to bring to your grace's notice the fact that I have recently been made a victim of the intrigues and lies of a certain Abbé Ceinture, who imposed on my kind-heartedness.

"Deceived by the representations of this ecclesiastic, I was led—"

Then, having signed and sealed his letter, he turned to his colleague and exclaimed:

"See here, my dear friend, let this be a warning to you never to recommend any one again."

## HYDROPHOBIA?

MY dear Genevieve, you asked me to tell you about my wedding journey. How do you suppose I dare venture to do so? Ah! you rogue, you never told me anything, you never even let me guess; but there—never mind. What, you have been married for eighteen months, yes, eighteen months, you, who call yourself my best friend, you, who never hid anything from me before, and you had not the kindness to tell me. If you had only given me a hint, if you had forewarned me; if you had let the slightest, the very tiniest suspicion come into my mind you would have prevented me from making a big blunder over which I am still blushing, and at which my husband will laugh till his dying day, and for which you, you alone, are to blame!

I have made myself ridiculous forever, I have committed one of those blunders that are never forgotten, all through your fault, naughty girl! . . . Oh, if I had known!

Well, it will comfort me to write to you, and I have decided to tell everything. But promise me that you will not laugh too much. Do not expect a comedy. It is a drama.

You remember my marriage. I was to set out that same evening on my wedding journey. Certainly, I was not much like Paulette, whose story Gyp has told us so humorously in her witty novel,

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"Autour du Marriage." And if my mother had said, as Mme. Hautretan did to her daughter: "Your husband will embrace you . . ." I certainly should not have replied as Paulette did, bursting out laughing: "Say no more, mamma . . . I know all about it as well as you do . . ."

I knew nothing at all, and mamma, my poor mamma who is frightened at everything, did not dare to broach this delicate subject.

Well, at five o'clock in the evening after the wedding collation, they told us that the carriage was waiting. The guests had left, I was ready. I can still recall the noise of the trunks going downstairs, and papa's nasal tones, for he did not want to look as if he were crying. As he kissed me, the poor man said: "Keep up your courage," as if I were going to have a tooth pulled. As for mamma, she was a fountain. My husband hurried me so as to avoid these distressing farewells, and I was in tears myself, although I was very happy. How can one explain that? And yet it is a fact. All at once I felt something dragging at my dress. It was Bijou, who had been quite forgotten since morning. The poor animal was bidding me good-bye in its own fashion. It gave me a little pang at my heart and I longed to kiss my dog. I picked him up, (you know he is as big as one's fist), and began to cover him with kisses. I love to kiss a dog. As for him, he was beside himself; he moved his paws, licked me and gave me little bites, as he does when he is very happy. All at once he caught hold of my nose and it hurt me. I gave a little scream and put him down on the ground. He had actually bitten me in play. My nose was bleeding. Every-

## HYDROPHOBIA?

one was distracted. They brought me water, vinegar, pieces of rag, and my husband insisted on attending to me himself. It was really nothing, just two little holes, as if pierced by a needle. At the end of five minutes the blood had been stanched and we set out.

It was decided that we should take a trip of about six weeks through Normandy.

That evening we reached Dieppe. When I say "evening," I mean midnight.

You know how I love the sea. I told my husband that I would not go to bed, until I had seen it. He appeared much annoyed. I asked him laughing, "Are you sleepy?"

He replied: "No, my dear; but you ought to know that I am anxious to be alone with you."

I was surprised. "Alone with me? Why, we have been alone ever since we left Paris, in the train."

He smiled. "Yes—but—in the train is not the same thing as if we were in our room."

I would not give in. "Well, monsieur, we are alone on the beach. That is enough."

Decidedly this did not please him. But he said: "Well, if you wish it so."

It was a magnificent night, one of those nights when grand, vague ideas pass through one's soul, sensations rather than ideas, with longings to open one's arms, to spread one's wings, to embrace the sky, what do I know? One thinks one is about to understand the meaning of things, hitherto unknown. There is a dreaminess, a poetry permeating all, a happiness that is not of the earth, a sort of infinite intoxication, that comes from the stars, from the moon, from the flowing, silvery tide. These are

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the best moments in life. They show us a different side of Life, beautified, exquisite. They are as a revelation of what might be—or of what is to be.

However, my husband seemed impatient to go indoors. I said:

"Are you cold? No? Well, then, look at that little boat over there, that seems to be asleep on the water. Could it be pleasanter anywhere than here? I could stay here till morning. Say, would you like to wait here till daybreak?"

He thought I was laughing at him, and he almost dragged me to the hotel.

When we were alone I felt a constraint, an embarrassment, without knowing why, I swear to you. Finally, I made him go into the dressing room while I got into bed.

Suddenly I thought he had gone crazy. Then fear took possession of me and I asked myself if he were going to kill me. When you are afraid you do not stop to think, you lose your head. In the space of a moment, I imagined all sorts of terrible things. I thought of the various stories in the newspapers, of the mysterious crimes, of all the stories whispered by young girls who have married wretches! I knew nothing about this man. I fought him, pushed him away from me, wild with terror. I even snatched out a handful of hair from his head and from one side of his mustache, and thus freeing myself, I rose, screaming "Help, help!" I drew back the bolts of the door and darted out on to the staircase, with very little on.

Other doors flew open. Men in their night shirts appeared, with candles in their hand. I fell into

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the arms of one of them, imploring his protection. He began to pitch in to my husband.

I don't know what happened then. They were fighting, and screaming, and then they laughed, you cannot imagine how they laughed. Everyone in the house laughed, from the cellar to the attic. I heard explosions of mirth in the halls and in the rooms above. The kitchen boys were laughing under the eaves and the watchman was writhing with laughter on his mattress in the vestibule.

Just imagine that; in a hotel!

When I presently found myself alone with my husband he explained things to me much as one might explain an experiment in chemistry, before trying it. He was not at all pleased. I cried until morning, and we started out as soon as the doors were open.

The following day we arrived at Pourville, which is as yet only an embryo bathing resort. My husband was very attentive, very affectionate. But you do not know how I began to dislike him, now I knew the truth. I was desperate, sad enough to die, disillusioned with everything, and longing to return to my poor parents. The next day we reached Étretat. All the bathers were in a ferment. A young woman, who had been bitten by a little dog, had just died of hydrophobia. A shudder ran through me when I heard them talking about it at the table-d'hôte. I seemed to feel a pain in my nose all at once, and peculiar sensations all along my limbs.

I did not sleep that night; I had completely forgotten my husband. Perhaps I would also die of hydrophobia! I asked the landlord for the particulars, the following day. They were frightful. I

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spent the day walking along the cliff. I could not speak, I could only think. Hydrophobia! What a dreadful death! Henry asked me:

"What is the matter with you? You seem sad."

"Nothing, nothing," I replied. My distracted gaze was fixed on the sea, without seeing anything, on the farms, on the plains without my being able to tell what I was looking at. Nothing would have induced me to tell what was worrying me. I felt some pains in my nose. I wanted to go in.

As soon as I reached the hotel I shut myself in to look at the wound. It was no longer visible. And, yet, I was positive that it pained me.

I at once wrote my mother a short letter that must have surprised her. I asked for an immediate reply to insignificant questions. After signing my name, I added: "Above all, do not forget to tell me how Bijou is."

The next day I could not eat, but I would not see a doctor. I sat all day long on the beach looking at the bathers. They went in, the fat and the thin, all ugly in their hideous costumes; but I was not thinking of being amused. I thought:

"How happy they are, those people! They have not been bitten. They will live! They fear nothing. They can amuse themselves as they please. How calm they are!"

I put my hand to my nose to feel it every moment. Was it not swelling? And as soon as I got into the hotel I shut myself in my room to examine it in the glass. Oh, if it had changed color I should die at once.

That evening I felt, all at once, a sort of affection for my husband, the affection of a desperate

## HYDROPHOBIA?

woman. He seemed kind. I leaned on his arm. Twenty times I almost told him my dreadful secret.

He took an odious advantage of my listlessness and weakness of will, and I had not the strength to resist him. I would have endured everything, suffered everything. The next day I received a letter from my mother. She answered my questions, but did not say a word about Bijou. I thought at once: "He is dead and they are hiding it from me." Then I was going to run to the office and send a telegram. An idea stopped me. "If he is really dead, they will not tell me!" So I resigned myself to two more days of torture. And I wrote again, asking them to send the dog to amuse me, as time hung heavy on my hands.

In the afternoon I began to tremble. I could not lift up a glassful of water without spilling half of it. My mind was in a pitiable condition. I evaded my husband at twilight and went off to church. I prayed a long time.

On my way home I again felt pains in my nose and I went into a druggist's whose store was lighted. I told him of a friend of mine who had been bitten and asked his advice. He was a pleasant man, very obliging. He gave me no end of advice, but I forgot everything as soon as he told me, for my mind was so upset. All I could remember was "Cathartics are frequently recommended." I bought several bottles of I know not what, under pretext of sending them to my friend.

Every dog I met terrified me and made me long to run away as fast as I could. Several times it seemed to me as if I would like to bite them.

The following day I received my mother's reply.

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"Bijou is well," she wrote, "but it would be too great a risk to send him alone in the train." So they would not send him to me. He was dead!

I could not sleep. As for Henry, he was snoring away.

The next day I bathed in the sea. It almost made me ill when I first went in, it gave me such a chill. This icy feeling worried me. I had a dreadful trembling of the legs, but my nose did not trouble me any more.

I was introduced, by chance, to the medical man attached to the bathing establishment, a charming man. I tried very cleverly to lead up to my subject. I told him that my young dog had bitten me a few days before, and asked what I should do in the event of any inflammation setting in. He began to laugh and replied: "In your situation, I see only one thing to do, madame, that is to make you a new nose."

And as I did not understand, he said, "But that concerns your husband."

I knew as much as I did before.

Henry was very jolly that evening, very happy. We went to the casino, but he would not stay till the play was over.

That night I could not sleep, my nerves were so tense. He could not sleep, either. He was very tender and gentle as he kissed me, as though he guessed how I was suffering.

But, suddenly, I had an extraordinarily terrific attack. I uttered a frightful scream, and pushing away my husband who was holding me I darted about the room and fell down on my face against the door. I was lost.

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Henry lifted me up, terrified, wanting to know the cause of it. But I was silent. I was resigned now. I awaited death. I knew that, after a few hours' respite. I should have another attack, then another, and another, until the last which would be fatal.

I let them take me back to bed. At daybreak my husband annoyed me so that I had another attack which lasted longer than the first. I wanted to tear, to bite, to howl; it was terrible, and yet less painful than I had imagined.

Towards eight o'clock in the morning I fell asleep for the first time in four nights.

At eleven o'clock a dear voice awoke me. It was mamma who had been alarmed by my letters and had hurried off to see me. She held in her hand a large basket from which there suddenly proceeded barking. I seized it, wild with hope. I opened it, and Bijou jumped out on the bed, licking me, jumping up, rolling on my pillow, in a frenzy of joy.

Well, my dear, you may believe me, or not—I did not understand it until the following day.

Oh, the imagination! How it works! And to think that I could believe? . . . Was it not stupid? . . .

I never told anyone, you can understand it, can you not, the tortures of those four days? Fancy, if my husband had known it! He laughs at me enough already about my adventure at Pourville. However, I do not mind his teasing very much. I am used to it. One becomes accustomed to everything in this life.

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